PRESIDENT Arroyo waves from her car coming from the Philippine Tourism Congress in Puray City. [illegible]

Lapids ordered: Answer plunder raps ACROSS/ A15

World Chess Cup: So shocks Ivanchuk SPORTS/ A23

Comatose for 23 years, Belgian feels reborn WORLD/ A21

SC extends early campaigning NEWS/ A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, November 26, 2009 ★★★ 9 sections / Vol. 24 / No. 151 P18

UN condemns mass murder; RP beats Iraq

THE UNITED NATIONS ON WEDNESDAY deplored the massacre of at least 57 people, including journalists, in Maguindanao and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

In a statement issued by his spokesperson at the UN headquarters in New York and posted on the UN website, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned the "heinous crime."

"The secretary general extends heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and hopes that no effort will be

UN CONDEMNS A/7

GMA asked: Why no arrests yet?

Suspects treated with kid gloves–Biazon

By Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio

SEN. RODOLFO BIAZON yesterday asked Malacañang why no arrests had been made three days after the slaughter of at least 57 people in Maguindanao in the worst political violence in the country's history.

"I am still wondering why so many days after evidence had been established as to the occurrence of such a dastardly criminal act and the identification of possible perpetrators and mastermind has been mentioned by many sectors, why is there no arrest made yet," Biazon told the Inquirer.

"In political consideration a major factor here considering Maguindanao has submitted that both warring families were political allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo?"

The rivalry between the Ampatuans and Mangudadatus was blamed for the violent deaths of three members of the Mangudadatu

GMA ASKED A4

EVIDENCE BURIED A smashed Toyota Tamaraw with Plate No. UTG-214 is lifted out of a mass grave in Ampatuan, Maguindanao, where at least 57 human bodies have been found. [illegible]

Maguindanao massacre death toll climbs to 57

AMPATUAN, MAGUINDANAO—A few kilometers off the main highway on a ramose hilltop covered with waist-high grass, bodies lay with twisted hands reaching in the air. They had been shot point-blank.

Nearby, cadavers were being laid out under bananas leaves on Tuesday as police—their faces covered against the stench—unearthed a mass grave containing 22 victims from Monday's ambush on an election convoy.

The discovery brought the death toll to 46—an unprecedented act of violence at the outset of the country's election season. This climbed to 57 yesterday after two more 10-foot deep mass graves yielded 11 bodies.

Chief Supt. Josefino Catalan, regional police chief, said two of the newly dug up bodies were inside two vehicles. An

other van was also recovered from the same grave.

He said the fatalities included more than 20 journalists who were out to cover the filing of the certificate of candidacy for Maguindanao governor of Buluan Vice Mayor Esmael Man-

MAGUINDANAO A6

Ampatuans ousted from ruling party

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of Lakas-Kampi-CMD last night voted unanimously to expel Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan Jr. and his two sons, Zaldy Uy Ampatuan of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr. of Datu Unsay town, as party members in good standing, after they were linked to the Maguindanao massacre.

AMPATUANS A10

Palace: We are only human

By Christine V. Esguerra

SORRY, BUT WE'RE ONLY HUMAN.

Malacañang yesterday gave this pathetic excuse for its failure to stop the killing of journalists—most recently the massacre of at least 13 media practitioners in Maguindanao that has made the Philippines the world's most dangerous place for media workers.

"We don't have full control of the situation on the ground, marcos as we are," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita sheepishly

PALACE A6

Gloria declares day of mourning for 57 victims

PORAC, PAMPANGA—AS THOUGH IN REACTION TO criticism over the Palace's rapid response to the killing in Maguindanao of at least 57 people, including lawyers and journalists, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said today would be a day of mourning.

"I am declaring a day of mourning for the victims of the mass murder in Mindanao," the President said in Filipino during another of her jaunts to her home province of Pampanga, this time to open a P360-million access road connecting Porac to the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx).

"I am outraged as everyone is at this crime. It is a

GLORIA A6

House, Senate to probe massacre

By Christine O. Avendaño and Leila B. Salaverria

LAWMAKERS IN THE TWO CHAMBERS of Congress have filed resolutions calling for an inquiry into the mass murder believed perpetrated by an ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo in Maguindanao.

In filing Senate Resolution No. 1491 yesterday, Senators Benigno Aquino III and Manuel Roxas sought an investigation and asked the chamber to condemn "in the strongest possible terms the brutal and inhuman election-related massacre and carnage of innocent civilians."

Aquino and Roxas also joined other senators in calling on authorities to discern the private armies in Maguindanao.

At the House, Sultan Kudarat Rep. Pax Mangudadatu filed on Tuesday a resolution also calling for an investigation to determine "the true national policy as regards the security situation in Mindanao," as well as the culpability of

HOUSE A6

WIDOW WAITING The wife of slain journalist Napoleon Salayay watches over his casket by the roadside as she waits for transport.

Kin grieve over murder most foul

By Rosa May V. de Guzman
Inquirer Mindanao

KORONADAL CITY—DECOMPOSING bodies lie on soiled concrete tables at the morgue, their foul stench overpowering the cool breeze flowing from the open door and forcing many of the grieving viewers to nose masks and some to cover vomit.

The throng of inconsolable people were hoping that death had not come to their loved ones.

Thirteen of the victims of Monday's massacre on a hill in Ampatuan town in Maguindanao were brought to Sultan Panasol Hamer, waiting to be identified—painfully—by their relatives. Bureau Alan Montaño Service has 17 bodies, and

SIX GRIEVE A/7

SOME TOO SOON The happy family of lawyer Cynthia Oquendo, her husband and their three young children is now only a memory. [illegible]

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

PCSO 6/55 LOTTO
21 2 23 27 18 25
PCSO 6/45 GRAND LOTTO
3 7 2 5 7 5
PCSO 3D/2D
2 7 4 2 0 4 4
PCSO LOTTO 6/42
1 10 15 19 21 27
PHP4,884,647.60

SC extends early campaigning

By Norman Bordadora

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERDAY RULED that there is no law banning politicians from airing infomercials and putting up campaign billboards and posters even after they have filed their certificates of candidacies and before the start of the official campaign period.

In a resolution that reversed its September 2009 decision removing a first-term del Norte town mayor from campaigning for "permanent campaigning," the tribunal said that a candidate is not liable for any election offense like premature campaigning before the start of the campaign period.

It clarified that the Autonomous Election Law, or Republic Act 9006, provides that a person who has filed a certificate of candidacy is not a candidate until the campaign period starts.

"In layman's language, this means that a candidate is liable for an election offense only for acts done during the campaign period, not before," the high court said.

"The law is clear as daylight...any election offense that may be committed by a candidate under any election law cannot be committed before the start of the campaign period," it said.

This was a reversal of the high court's September 2009 decision finding Rosalinda Ibes, the mayor of Sta. Monica, Surigao del Norte, guilty of premature campaigning in the 2007 elections and stripping her of her position.

After filing her certificate of candidacy for the 2007 polls, Ibes held a mercenade to encourage people to vote her into office. The court said the mercenade constituted premature campaigning because it was held before the start of the official campaign period.

Under the law, the campaign period for national posts starts three months before May 10, or election day. The campaign period for local posts is even shorter.

The Comelec promptly warned would-be candidates that their infomercials that had been airing over radio, television and other would have to stop once they filed them (COCs) or they would risk being charged in court as the high court decision had confirmed that there was such a crime as premature campaigning.

In yesterday's decision, the Supreme Court clarified that the poll commission law provides for the early filing of COCs to give the Comelec ample time to print the ballots.

Supreme Court spokesperson Midas Marquez explained that those running for office in the 2010 elections may continue to air their infomercials and post billboards and posters even after they have filed their certificates of candidacies.

"Their filing of COCs should not stop them from coming out with their ads," said Marquez in a news conference in assistance the Supreme Court decision.

"That would be part of the burden of supporters," he added.

Presidential bets wooing FVR

By Cynthia D. Balana

AMOS

ALL BUT ONE PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL has sought his endorsement for the coming 2010 election, but former President Fidel V. Ramos just does not hold, saying he would announce his choice by March or April next year.

Speaking to reporters at the launch of his book, "Reform of FVR Secretary," Vol. IV - On Board the Philippine Ship (Filipinos Together)," at the Manila Hotel, Ramos said the presidentiables are judged his reputation as a former president and related his views on their election bid.

"All presidentiables, including prominent presidentiables, have voluntarily come to my office at my invitation, which is in Alabang, to talk about 2010. They came to consult their kids who has been there ... except one," he said.

Ramos did not mention the name of the candidate who has not yet approached him but some of his close allies, who were present in the book launch, said he was probably referring to former President Joseph Estrada.

Ramos said there were before him like any candidate for them to have a dialogue but he has not yet responded "because of the heavy pressure of work in his foundation."

Ramos confirmed his meeting with presidential candidate Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III and vice presidential bet Mar Roxas of the Liberal Party on Tuesday night in the "Cory Aquino room" in his EDSA Victoria Court office in Makati.

Ramos, one of the leaders of the EDSA revolution that ousted Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, said he shunned the young Aquino's bid phone collection. They talked about the life of Aquino's mother and her administration, where Ramos served as chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and defense secretary. Ramos was Cory Aquino's running mate in the 1992 presidential election.

Ramos said it was too early for him to endorse anyone. "Too much my body language. It's too early (to make an endorsement) but come late March or early April, that's when you will find the answer."

Ramos said his new book contained his "unsolicited advice" for the incumbent and the next president on how to manage the economy or "how to run this ship which should be competitive."

There's a chance GMA, Ermita will be colleagues

By TJ Burgonio

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY EDUARDO Ermita said he would be thrilled to rub elbows with President Macapagal-Arroyo in the House of Representatives in 2010 as current rumbled yesterday that she was set to file her certificate of candidacy.

But Ermita also stressed that Ms Arroyo has kept the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD in the dark about her political plans.

"I have no personal knowledge on the matter. I'm very sorry," Ermita said when asked to confirm reports the President was filing her CoC this weekend. "I don't know if there is anybody who might know about it."

"Whenever she might be, of course, my assumption will be something to look forward to because she is the President ... there is always the thrill of being with the President," Ermita told reporters.

Ms Arroyo has hinted speculations she would seek a seat in Congress with her many ears in Pampanga's second district. Her election lawyer, however, denied this.

A possibility

Ermita said he was considering running for a congressional seat in Batangas to take the place of his daughter Rep. Eileen Ermita-Buhain.

"That's a possibility," he said candidly, when asked about the possibility of him joining Ms Arroyo in the House in July 2010.

But Ermita reiterated that he did not know what Ms Arroyo's political plans were.

"Meaning, you're saying as well na that she's going there, but I said that that's a question that I do not know. In my case, that's a possibility."

"Your guess is as good as mine," he said, when pressed again on why the President had been making frequent trips to her hometown Lubao and other parts of Pampanga's second district.

Ermita said Ms Arroyo has not consulted any party about whether or not she should run for Congress in the May 2010 elections but added there was no need for her to do so. He said he expected her to make the decision on her own.

"The President is the President. She's a political person. She has gone through several elections...as senator earlier now, and as Vice President before she became President. So she doesn't need any supervision of as to how the political implications, consequences ... whatever. So she alone can make such a decision," he said.

Good politician

As a good politician, "she knows what she's about this," he added.

Ermita, who slid down from presidency to chair of the Lakas party's advisory council, said he wasn't aware if the party had picked a candidate for Pampanga's second district.

The President's son, Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, is the incumbent congressman representing the district.

Ermita denied that the party had already issued a certificate nominating Ms Arroyo as its congressional candidate for Pampanga's second district.

"What's important is that there's legal basis [for her to run for a congressional seat]," he said.

WITH CHIZ DEPARTURE

NPC left holding the bag

REP. FRANCIS ESCUDERO'S decision to abandon his presidential bid has left his party, the Nacionalist People's Coalition, in limbo.

According to Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, Escudero's unannounced last Monday that he was not running for president or any national position in 2010 was a "surprise" to the NPC leadership and members.

With an standard-bearer in 2010, the NPC is "at a loss" on how it will be able to field candidates for national positions, said Durano, who is planning to run for the Senate.

He said Escudero's withdrawal has made it difficult for the NPC senatorial aspirants to find allies in slots in other parties.

"Where will we get it will be hard for us," he said, noting that other parties have more or less filled up their senatorial slates.

"We are still awaiting for the decision of the party" on what alliances it would make with other parties, Durano said.

The party could choose to support any of the presidential candidates or "it can be a free for all," he said.

But Durano said the party "re-spected" Escudero's decision to leave the race. "We understand. You should not force somebody to run," he said.

Escudero left the NPC a few weeks ago, but was still included in the NPC's choice of candidates to support in 2010.

Durano said he himself would decide whether or not he should pursue his plan to run for the Senate in the next few days.

Aside from Durano, the NPC said it would be fielding reservations and ex-senator and Tito Sotto and former Rep. Rodolfo Plaza in the Senate race.

Reinher C. Alano

ESCUDERO

Corrections

IN THE NOV. 13 ISSUE, a business article on Page B4—"Strong airline sales boost ABS-CBN's 9-mo earnings"—misstated that ABS-CBN's Skypeddle unit gained a 19-percent sales growth in P7.67 billion, accounting for 42 percent of consolidated revenue. The growth was registered by ABS-CBN's direct sales, misleading sales of services from Skypeddle.

* * *

IN THE NOV. 24 ISSUE, the front-page banner story—"21 killed in Maguindanao"—misspelled the first name of the vice mayor of Buluan in Maguindanao. The vice mayor's name is Esmael—not Ishmael—Mangudadatu.

'TIS THE SEASON

BEHIND SEEN is the name of the game with the start of the political season, as this spread shows. Clockwise (from left), Sen. Manny Villar, the Nacionalista Party standard bearer, raises the hand of a new recruit, Pasig City Mayor Bobby Eusebio; former Sen. Ralph Recto and his wife, Batangas Gov. Vilma Santos, and some 200 other officials of the province as sworn into the Liberal Party ranks as vice presidential candidate; Sen. Mar Roxas; Sen. Loren Legarda, Villar's running mate, visits the San Roque Dam as part of a Senate inquiry; and former Joseph Estrada (second on left) visits Silvino Joey de Vivero III as member of the Persma ng Mayang Pilipino.

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Priest joins NP as Bukidnon bet

By Michael Lim Ubac and Beverly T. Hatividad

THE SO-CALLED PRIEST TO the Lumads of Mindanao is the newest addition to the Nacionalista Party (NP) and will be the party's candidate for governor in Bukidnon.

Fr. Diosdado Talino, 46, yesterday joined the 700 new recruits of the NP including Governor Jose Joseph Cua, Pasig City Mayor Robert "Bobby" Eusebio and Vice Mayor Rosalio "Roying" Martinez, all from the administration party, in taking their oath before NP standard-bearer Sen. Manuel Villar Jr.

Aurora provincial board member Shirlene Tangcan, who is running for governor, fellow board members Pedro Ong and Pablo Millan, Brgy. Ubaldi Erwerga and other Quezon officials also took oath as NP members.

Talino has championed indigenous people's right over their ancestral lands, and a noted for advocating and helping the Lumads.

"We want to help change significantly the current troubling social and economic situations in the province molded by past leadership wielding absolute power and breeding the people in apathy and hopelessness," he said following the oath-taking ceremony at the Laurel House in Maramag City.

Talino, a fellow of the Ford Foundation's International Scholarship Program, was a parish priest of Valencia, Bukidnon from 2001 to 2007.

Automatically suspended

He left for the Netherlands in 2007 to pursue further studies.

Upon his return this year, he became assistant to the administrator of the San Isidro Cathedral in Malaybalay, Bukidnon.

Asked by reporters why he joined the Villar camp, Talino said: "Aside from his track record, it is Senator Villar who has frequently visited Mindanao and promoted his Mindanao agenda as a priority of his leadership among all the presidentiables, so we made him our choice," said the priest.

Talino will be deemed automatically suspended from performing priestly work, including officiating sacraments, once he files his COC, NP officials said.

Eusebio and Martinez led a group of Pasay City officials in taking their oath as new NP members at the Tanghalang Pasigeño yesterday.

"We think it is only right to give our support to the one who has the capability to lead the country. The country deserves someone with experience," Eusebio said.

Following the event in Pasig, Villar swore in 700 leaders from across the country at the Laurel House in Maramag City led by Cua and Aurora Governor-elect Gerardo Noble with Manila Vice Mayor Isko Moreno, who had earlier taken his oath.

The 700 oath-takers came from Ilocos Norte, Isabela, Benguet, Pangasinan, La Union, Aurora, Zambales, Pampanga, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac and the National Capital Region.

More defects seen

According to Villar, more local officials from Metro Manila are still expected to defect to the NP in the run-up to the 2010 elections.

The Nacionalistas said "hold on to good leaders rally at Plaza Miranda in Intramuros, Manila, on Sunday to announce its senatorial lineup and local candidates in the 2010 polls. They will file their certificates of candidacies (COCs) the following day.

"It's all systems go. The consensus is of Manlilikha Day is a fitting date to file my candidacy and seal my sincere intention to serve the country and make a difference in the lives of my fellow Filipinos like Andres Bonifacio," said Villar.

"While studying at the Ateneo de Jesus Nazareno Elementary School in Tondo, Gat Andres Bonifacio became my inspiration. I admire his patriotism and perseverance," he said.

House forms committee on women

By Leila B. Salaverria

A NEW COMMITTEE WILL BE formed in the House of Representatives to provide more attention to the welfare of women and to protect them from abuse and violence, Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman disclosed yesterday, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The Committee on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children (or its acronym) will be formed in session on Dec. 7, Speaker Prospero Nograles agreed to the formation of the new committee upon Lagman's suggestion.

Lagman denounced all forms of violence against women, and said those responsible become less than human.

"Violence against women dehumanizes us all and when we talk about gender-based violence, we are not only talking about women's rights. We are talking about human rights," Lagman said in a statement.

The observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women came as the Philippines reels from the massacre in Maguindanao where a group of women, including the wife of a local politician and lawyers, were waylaid and slain by armed men linked to a political rival.

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7. VELARDE, Eddie
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'Urduja' weakens but leaves Cagayan de Oro flooded

By Alcuin Papa

TROPICAL DEPRESSION "URDUJA" HAD weakened into a low-pressure area, prompting the weather bureau to lower all storm signal warnings issued earlier.

But 3 p.m. weather update yesterday the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the center of the low-pressure area is estimated to be 350 kilometers east of Surigao City.

The weather system is forecast to move east at 11 kilometers per hour.

Raina Rose Umbida, the 22nd tropical cyclone to enter the Philippine area of responsibility and the third this month, caused heavy flooding in parts of Cagayan de Oro, Davao and Misamis.

Nathaniel Cruz, the Pagasa deputy administrator, said the weather bureau was watching another weather system, with tentative local name "Vinta," that might enter the Philippine area of responsibility this weekend.

Cruz said Vinta would pass through the northeast corner of the Philippine area of responsibility while moving northwest, and will be renamed "Vinta" when it en-

ters the country.

Aldczar Aurelio of the weather forecasting section said rains can be expected in Palawan and parts of the Visayas and Mindanao because of the prevalence of the intertropical convergence zone (ITZC).

These areas will experience cloudy weather with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. These conditions could spread over other parts of Mindanao.

The ITZC is a region near the equator where winds from the northern and southern hemispheres meet, causing the formation of tarrings of clouds and low-pressure areas.

A low-pressure area is a lower form of tropical cyclone.

Judge rejects Big 3 petition for his inhibition

By Tina G. Santos

A MANILA JUDGE HAS REFUSED TO INhibit himself from hearing a suit aimed at stopping the Big 3 oil companies from raising the prices of oil products.

Manila Judge Alfredo Perapalo is said the motion for inhibition filed separately by Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell failed to prove with substantial evidence the allegations of bias and partiality against him.

Perapalo is hearing a motion from the Social Justice Society (SJS) asking the court to stop the Big 3 oil companies—Petron, Pilipinas Shell and Chevron Phil.— from "further increasing the pump prices of their petroleum products."

The oil firms responded by filing a motion seeking the judge's voluntary inhibition, saying they had "lost faith and confidence" that there could be "a fair and impartial resolution" of the SJS suit because of the Perapalo's "senseless, random and pronouncements."

Serious doubts

They said they had serious doubts about Perapalo's "integrity and fairness in dispense justice with the cold neutrality of a magistrate."

They also questioned the jurisdiction of the court since "price adjustments are not illegal or prohibited unless in clear cases of monopoly combinations in restraint of trade or unfair competition."

"Under the Oil Deregulation Law, the exclusive jurisdiction to investigate and determine these violations lies within the powers of the Department of Energy-Department of Justice (DOE-DOJ) Task Force and not with the trial court," the oil companies said.

In his ruling rejecting the motion, Perapalo said the allegations against him by the oil companies were untrue and baseless.

More suspicion not enough

"It has already been established by jurisprudence that motion for inhibition must be grounded on just and valid causes," the judge said.

Citing a Supreme Court ruling, he said that "For bias and prejudice to be considered valid reasons for the voluntary inhibition of judges, mere suspicion is not enough. Bare allegations of their partiality will not suffice in the absence of evidence."

The judge said that to grant the motion for inhibition would open the floodgates to a form of forum-shopping, in which litigants would be allowed to shop for a judge more sympathetic to their cause. Such action would be detrimental to the speedy and fair administration of justice.

In a month's time

The judge said he may resolve the issue of price manipulation in a month's time.

"I already asked the parties involved to submit a formal offer of evidence. After that, the case is deemed submitted for resolution," Perapalo said.

At the hearing of the SJS case yesterday, Bren Lee U, the dean of the School of Economics of the University of Asia and the Pacific who testified in favor of the oil firms, was questioned mainly on the results of a study that the U&P conducted with SGV & Co. in 2003 to 2007 on the pricing structure of the oil firms.

In a previous hearing, Uy said the court that the price hikes imposed by the oil firms were reasonable and that there was no proof of overcharging.

Massacre planned, says Buluan vice mayor

MONDAY'S MASSACRE IN this province, Maguindanao, was well planned, with the gunmen waiting for their victims for days and the guests prepared in advance, the Buluan vice mayor said.

"They waited for the victims for two days," said one source, who has contacts in the area, of the some 100 armed followers of the Ampatuan clan.

The source said the gunmen were also dug deep before Monday's killings.

"The backhoes were already in the area days before Monday," the source said.

But the source told Buluan Vice Mayor Esmael Mangudadatu from Monday's killings.

Mangudadatu, himself a lawyer, is one of women supporters and journalists the filing of his certificate of candidacy for governor in the Commission on Elections office in Shariff Aguak town.

Mangudadatu himself ordered covering reports that the Ampatuans, whom he will challenge in the gubernatorial race in next year's elections, had threatened to "bury them alive" (mabubuhay sila ng libol) his candidacy. In he told an all-source wiretap and journalists.

"Under our tradition, Muslim women are being respected. They should not be harmed just like innocent children and the elders," the vice mayor said on Monday before the group left for Shariff Aguak.

He was wrong.

Last Tuesday, some 100 armed men, believed led by Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr., blocked the convoy of Mangudadatu's wife, Genalyn, and 30 others, including many members of the media.

The wife and two sisters of Vice Mayor Esmael "Toto" Mangudadatu of Buluan town in Maguindanao were among those murdered by armed men who stopped their convoy on Monday while they were on their way to file his certificate of candidacy for governor at the Commission on Elections office in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

The armed men were said to be from the clan of Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Sr.

In a phone interview, Reason said it was apparent that the Palace was "still handling the massacre] with kid gloves."

He also asked why the local police officials remained to be in the area where the convoy was stopped had "not been arrested like any other criminal." The four were earlier reported to have been detained by the Philippine National Police.

Dureza's role questioned

Reason also questioned why Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Jesus Dureza is overseeing the investigation of the mass murder, describing the massacre as a "national political matter."

Dureza created a probe Ampatuans in Shariff Aguak town in Maguindanao on Tuesday afternoon.

"They committed to submit themselves to our investigation," Dureza told the Inquirer by phone.

The meeting, held at the Ampatuan residence in Shariff Aguak, was attended by Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), his younger brother Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Jr. and the family police chief, Inquirer reported.

Dureza, however, refused to say.

But Dureza said he did not ask if indeed Mayor Ampatuan led the killers. "I went there to tell them about the creation of the crisis management committee, and about the investigation," he said.

Is the government afraid?

Commenting on the meeting, Carlos Isagani Zarate, secretary general of the Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao, said that it showed government "weakness in the face of an unspeakable act of barbarism."

"Is this government afraid? Or inside? Or simply powerless against the powers-that-be in Maguindanao?" the lawyer asked.

Asked about the criticisms, Dureza insisted Tuesday Eduardo Ermita told reporters that Mayor Ampatuan and his followers should not themselves in the investigations.

"It definitely will help if those who feel that they are already being considered as suspect for them to turn themselves in and cooperate with the law enforcement agencies," Ermita said in a briefing.

"To prove they're innocent, they should give themselves up rather than go against the law by not turning themselves in," he said, adding that this will help defuse the situation.

No untouchables

Ermita dismissed claims that the Ampatuan clan, which delivered votes for Mr Arroyo in the 2004 presidential vote, was "untouchable."

"I don't see why they should be considered untouchable. People should be given equal protection of the law," he said.

Ermita said the ARMM government should also cooperate in the investigation.

"It will be to the credit of Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan, if being a regional governor, he will go above his personal interest and be cooperative to conduct of the investigation to show he's the man of the law that he's a leader that can be trusted, and that he respects the Constitution and our legal system," he said.

Ermita said the public should await the action of Dureza's team. He said the team would "identify those that will have to be cautioned, or that will be subject of the order for them to be disarmed, or he taken into custody[-] against whom [evidence] of arrest will be issued or charges will be filed."

Acting Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera told reporters yesterday after a visit to the troubled region that state lawyers and prosecutors were still gathering evidence.

"I ask for more time to evaluate (the evidence)," she said. "So far there's no evidence of rape. There was also no beheading."

'They might fight back'

Secretary Jose Gonzales, chief presidential legal counsel, cautioned the government against hastily arresting the Ampatuans in the absence of solid evidence.

"If we use the iron hand on them, they might fight back. We should use intervention. These are not ordinary people," he said by phone.

"We're guided by the rule of evidence, not by emotions. Suspicion, devastation are not synonymous with guilt," he added.

Gonzales said that the Maguindanao provincial government owned backhoes found in the clans' areas was a "circumstantial evidence" against the Ampatuans.

"But you can't convict somebody with one circumstantial evidence," said the former justice secretary. — With reports from Norman Bordadora in Manila; and Jeffrey M. Tupas, Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

WIDOWER Buluan Vice Mayor Esmael "Toto" Mangudadatu (second from left), who lost his wife and two sisters in the mass murder, confers with Secretary Jesus Dureza on Tuesday

GMA asked: Why no arrests yet?

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dates that on Monday along with 24 other people, including many members of the media.

The wife and two sisters of Vice Mayor Esmael "Toto" Mangudadatu of Buluan town in Maguindanao were among those murdered by armed men who stopped their convoy on Monday while they were on their way to file his certificate of candidacy for governor at the Commission on Elections office in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

The armed men were said to be from the clan of Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Sr.

In a phone interview, Reason said it was apparent that the Palace was "still handling [the massacre] with kid gloves."

He also asked why the local police officials remained to be in the area where the convoy was stopped had "not been arrested like any other criminal." The four were earlier reported to have been detained by the Philippine National Police.

Dureza's role questioned

Reason also questioned why Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Jesus Dureza is overseeing the investigation of the mass murder, describing the massacre as a "national political matter."

Dureza created a probe the Ampatuans in Shariff Aguak town in Maguindanao on Tuesday afternoon.

"They committed to submit themselves to our investigation," Dureza told the Inquirer by phone.

The meeting, held at the Ampatuan residence in Shariff Aguak, was attended by Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), his younger brother Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Jr. and the family police chief, Inquirer reported.

Dureza, however, refused to say.

But Dureza said he did not ask if indeed Mayor Ampatuan led the killers. "I went there to tell them about the creation of the crisis management committee, and about the investigation," he said.

Is the government afraid?

Commenting on the meeting, Carlos Isagani Zarate, secretary general of the Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao, said that it showed government "weakness in the face of an unspeakable act of barbarism."

"Is this government afraid? Or inside? Or simply powerless against the powers-that-be in Maguindanao?" the lawyer asked.

Asked about the criticisms, Dureza insisted Tuesday Eduardo Ermita told reporters that Mayor Ampatuan and his followers should not themselves in the investigations.

"It definitely will help if those who feel that they are already being considered as suspect for them to turn themselves in and cooperate with the law enforcement agencies," Ermita said in a briefing.

"To prove they're innocent, they should give themselves up rather than go against the law by not turning themselves in," he said, adding that this will help defuse the situation.

No untouchables

Ermita dismissed claims that the Ampatuan clan, which delivered votes for Mr Arroyo in the 2004 presidential vote, was "untouchable."

"I don't see why they should be considered untouchable. People should be given equal protection of the law," he said.

Ermita said the ARMM government should also cooperate in the investigation.

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Maguindanao massacre death toll climbs to 57

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gubernatorial in the May elections. But the exact number of victims was still unclear three days after the massacre.

"We expect to gather more bodies as our personnel scour the area," Calibbalan said in a mobile phone interview with the Inquirer.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has declared a state of emergency in the provinces of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat and Cotabato City, sending troop and police reinforcements to put order in the area.

Dozens of gunmen intercepted the convoy as it traveled on a two-lane highway that cuts across vast open tracts of land and banana groves, police said. They took some of the people in the group with them, where the killings claimed.

Bullet-riddled bodies

On Tuesday, authorities found 24 bullet-riddled bodies scattered on the ground next to five abandoned vehicles.

Police, aided by a backhoe, worked most of Tuesday to excavate the bodies from the mass grave. All had been shot multiple times and were dumped on top of one another. One was a pregnant woman.

Grieving relatives helped identify their loved ones before they were given the bodies, covered by banana leaves, for burial.

Mangudadatu was not in the convoy because he had received death threats. He said he met with the defense secretary, national police chief and military commanders to demand justice and the immediate arrest and prosecution of the killers of his wife, two sisters and other relatives.

He said four witnesses in his protective, whom he refused to identify, told him the convoy was stopped by gunmen loyal to Andal Ampatuan Jr., a town mayor and cleric, to prevent Mangudadatu's family from filing election papers.

Massacre planned

"It was really planned because they had already dug a huge hole (for the bodies)," Mangudadatu said.

He said there were reports from the area that the militia had been blocking the road for a few days.

Police said they were investigating reports that Mayor Ampatuan and dozens of policemen and pro-government militiamen were among the gunmen who blocked the convoy.

Mangudadatu's ruling governor is Zaldy Ampatuan, another son of former Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr. The powerful Ampatuans, who have ruled the impoverished province unopposed since 2001, are expected to run again next year. The clan could not be reached for comment.

The family helped deliver votes for the Arroyo administration in 2004 elections.

Ampatuan Jr. not yet suspect

Chief Supt. Leonardo Espina, PNP spokesperson, denied reports that Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr. of Datu Unsay town in Maguindanao has been tagged as primary suspect in the killings.

"Investigators are presently documenting all the evidences against persons purported to be involved in the crime," Espina said in a news briefing in Camp Crame, Quezon City.

"We cannot declare anybody as a suspect until we can make the allegations framed through a written statement from the complainants," he said.

Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon said that four commanders, including one provincial police chief had been relieved of their duties and confined to camp while being investigated.

Militiamen grounded

Also yesterday, the Armed Forces of the Philippines ordered the confiscation of all firearms and uniforms issued to the paramilitary units in Maguindanao after they were implicated in the massacre.

Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Madrigal, AFP vice chief of staff, ordered the grounding of the units composed of 100 men used as an auxiliary force in fighting rebels and criminals but often served as a private security force of local warlords.

"We are conducting an investigation as to the involvement of our own men and we would like to assure the public that this will be carried out impartially and transparently," Madrigal said.

Julkipli Wadi, a professor of Islamic studies at the University of the Philippines, said he doubted the national government's resolve in untangling the powers of political dynasties like the Ampatuans because they deliver votes during elections.

"Because of the absence of viable political institutions, powerful men are taking over," he said. "Big political forces and personalities in the national government are cornering the workforce, especially during election time, because they rely on big families for their votes." With reports from AP Marlon Ramos, TJ Burgonio, Edson Tandoc Jr. Cynthia B. Balana, Theo D. Jimenez and Nico Alconaba, Dennis Santos and Charlie Senase, Inquirer Mindanao

DAGUILAO Policemen walk over the recovery of victims from the mass grave of the massacre site.

2008 ANNUAL AWARDS

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Gloria declares day of mourning for 57 victims

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travesty of our pledge to uphold the basic humanity of every Filipino," she said.

Ms Arroyo also pledged that those responsible for the killings would be brought to justice. She said "the law will haunt them until they are caught."

"Commitment to human rights and human dignity shall prevail in the Philippines," she said.

But Commission on Human Rights Chair Leila de Lima said the President needed to prove that she was not protecting Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr, whose family controls Maguindanao and is suspected of masterminding the killings.

"I am appealing to the President to show political will ... to show to the public that the investigation by the government is serious, that swift and clear action is being undertaken by authorities to order to give justice to the victims, and hold the Ampatuans criminally liable," De Lima told Agence France-Presse.

She also said initial investigations had shown that "there is strong circumstantial evidence that the Ampatuans are involved," and that the attack "appears to be premeditated."

Black ribbons

In Malacañang, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said black ribbons would be put up in the Palace compound for today's day of mourning.

Ermita said the government was preparing to "disarm" the Ampatuans, who had helped Mrs Arroyo clinch victory in the 2004 presidential election and delivered a 12-0 sweep for the administration's Team Unity in the 2007 senatorial elections.

"This is not a simple election feud between opposing clans; this is a supreme act of inhumanity that is a blight on our nation," Mr Arroyo said in a strongly worded statement read by Ermita at a media briefing.

Ermita said the President had ordered that the massacre come out yesterday, apparently to counter criticism that her administration was treating the massacre with kid gloves.

He said Ms Arroyo was upset by the main incident: "Massive killings are piled up. Presidency."

But on Tuesday Leonel Nepomuceno, the President's deputy spokesperson, said the killings were only "an incident between two families in Mindanao."

"We cannot be affected by that ..." Palatulo had said.

Appeal for calm

The President said in her statement that she understood "too well the volatility of the political situation in (Maguindanao)."

"And for this reason, I reiterate my appeal for calm and restraint," she said. "This crime is too outrageous not to prick the conscience of this nation, or any other nation for that matter. Let us hope that the outrage is overcome by reason and by our need to live our lives in peace, honor and human dignity."

Added Ms Arroyo: "The gruesome killings in Maguindanao constitute a most heinous crime which makes it particularly so is the fact that it occurs among its victims, lawyers, media reporters and other defenseless and innocent civilians.

"Like many others, I am appalled and outraged by it, and I join the rising chorus of indignation against it."

More votes promised

At last week's national convention of the ruling Lakas Kampi CMD coalition, Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao took the microphone and pledged to deliver votes for many senatorial hopefuls. Gilbert Teodoro and the rest of the administration bet lost in the May 10 polls.

But Teodoro said: "The sense of debt of gratitude as a result of the (past) political exercises should not hinder the issue of whether anyone or any group has committed grave illegal acts or have violated the law.

"It should not be made an excuse for us not to follow the law."

Ermita said Secretary Jesus Dureza, head of the Mindanao Terror crisis committee, was preparing a list of "undisciplined" local executives to be held to the disarming of the Ampatuan private armies to help "darken the situation in the area."

"We are looking toward that direction," he said.

Ermita, however, mention president of Labas Kampi-CDP, said that Ampatuan could be determined by the party if they would be found responsible for the Maguindanao massacre.

"They're not [untouchable]," he said. "Nobody should be untouchable, and I mean nobody. If anyone commits a crime especially as heinous as this one, I don't see why anybody could think people should be considered untouchable."

Ermita urged Mayor Ampatuan Jr to "go above his personal interest and be very cooperative in the conduct of the investigation to show that he is a man of the law, a leader who can be trusted."

Visit to Poras

Despite her strong words and her purchased coverage over the mass murders, Ms Arroyo found time to visit Barangay Bantilan in Poras and unveil the marker of the 1.7-kilometer access road to the SCTEx.

The road is the second of the four additional interchanges heading to the SCTEx. The other two are the Tabang-Guiguinto interchange that was opened last year and the Pandi-Balagtas interchange expected to open next year.

"Finally, Poras can boast as a tourism center because of the access road. This is an introduction for investors," Bulacan Governor Joselito Mendoza said.

But De Lima, a former election lawyer, criticized Ms Arroyo's strategy of merely sending one of her advisers to talk with the Ampatuans yesterday and not someone from them that they would cooperate in an investigation.

"They opted for a diplomat's way out. There should be more than that," De Lima said.

She said she could not understand "why the investigative authorities, police and the justice department could not invite the Ampatuans for questioning, even if they be assisted by counsel." Reports from Charlene Cepalcyh in Pampanga, Christine T. Zaguirre in Manila, and AFP

ANGUISH: Andy is reunited with a shallow grave where at least 36 others were found buried in Ampatuan, Maguindanao. AFP PHOTO

MEMBERS of Bayan, Gabriela and other groups join the lighting of candles as the Bay Bread monument along Manila Diaz in Quezon City to condemn the killing of at least 21 women in Ruhan, Maguindanao. AFP PHOTO/ROSLAN RAHMAN

Other motorists among dead—PNP

AMPATUAN, MAGUINDANAO—PASSING motorists who had nothing to do with a political dispute were likely among 57 people killed when gunmen opened fire on a convoy of cars in Maguindanao, police said yesterday.

The gunmen, allegedly hired by a local politician who wanted to eliminate a challenge from a rival, stopped a convoy of six vehicles on Monday and shot the passengers from close range, according to police.

The passengers were aides and relatives of the rival politician, plus a group of journalists.

Five of the convoy's blood-spattered and bullet-riddled vehicles were found on Monday alongside a shallow grave containing most many of the bodies, said Chief Supt. Felicisimo Khu, the top police commander in the area.

The final toll was also found close by yesterday in a family dug grave alongside 11 freshly-discovered bodies, Khu said.

But police also unearthed a sixth and a seventh van, neither of which was part of the convoy and which were owned by residents of the area who had no affiliation to the politicians nor journalists, according to Khu.

"The six and the second van were not part of the convoy," Khu said. "They just happened to drive past."

He said relatives of the two vehicles' owners were awaiting outside police lines to claim their bits, who were presumed to have been killed.

But Khu could not say exactly how many people who had been in those cars had been killed. AFP

House, Senate to probe massacre

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senate military and public officials.

Maguindanao, of the political clan that lost a number of members in the Mendiluf killings, wants the Palace to uncover the story behind the massacre.

He cited reports indicating the involvement of politicians and armed civilian personnel of Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr., and said the Ampatuan clan's "power and influence in Maguindanao politics must be stopped."

'No more time'

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon expressed support for the Ampatuan resolutions, but Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he did not think the chamber should look into the killings.

According to Pimentel, it is "the concerned authorities [who] should diligently act."

"We will only need to delay procedure [if we hold an inquiry], and besides, how much time do we have considering that it is the budgetary season already?" he said.

On the phone with the bajucos, Maguindanao Rep. Simeon Datumanong said he had electoral protests from both Esmael Mangudadatu Sr. and Ibn Mangudadatu that they would participate in the investigation.

"I have appealed to them to help, as we do help, in the fast probe of the violence so that we will know the real scenarios, get the real facts and arrest the perpetrators," Datumanong said.

He said he had earlier been talking with the Ampatuans and the Mangudadatus—who, like himself, are members of the administration party Lakas-Kampi-CMD—in order to resolve a looming conflict over electoral posts.

Disarming, said Datumanong, was among the issues still, Biazon said Mindanao should first focus on the disarming of its allies' private armies, especially in the areas covered by Proclamation No. 1946.

The proclamation, issued by Ms Arroyo on Tuesday, declared a state of emergency in the province of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat and in Cotabato City.

Biazon, a former Armed Forces chief of staff, also said that in some ways, the Palace should be held accountable for its inability to prevent violence between the two clans.

"Malacañang failed to take all the necessary measures to prevent this political violence in spite of the fact that they were aware of the situation in Mindanao," Biazon said.

He said this was why he was urging the Palace to either declare "martial" or private armies before the May 2010 elections.

He added that he would not accept the police or military saying that it could not disarm private armies, "unless there is nothing has totally lost its political will to maintain law and order and restore the rule of law all over the Philippines."

Gov't farce

According to Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, "the entire government is in farce of one party, which, therefore, will give leeway to the other party to do everything as well against the other class," he said in an interview over ANC.

Senadores also said Ms Arroyo was obligated to go after the perpetrators "given the gravity of what was committed."

"I don't think she has a choice on this. And I'm sure not only the media but the international community is well would [indeed] be inside to this issue is raised. They would want to see a logical conclusion to it," he said.

Suspend them

In a related move, the LP challenged the Department of Interior and Local Government to put on preventive suspension the members of the Ampatuan clan who are holding public office in Maguindanao.

This is to ensure that the Ampatuans will not succeed in tracing their influences on the investigation and in destroying or hiding more information as the "government and lawmakers act," according to the LP spokesperson, Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III.

He also said the government should take a more active role by disarming the armed militias in Maguindanao.

Palace: We are only human

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acid reporters.

"Because we are only human, we cannot stop these things from happening, but we will have to do whatever is legally possible within human limits to be able to stop [them] and to prove to our participants as a government and as a country," he added in Filipino.

Ermita heads the presidential human rights committee, which regularly reports to the United Nations on the Philippine government's progress in preserving human rights in the country.

"Too bad this thing had to happen," he said, referring to the abduction and gruesome murder of members of the Mangudadatu family, lawyers, journalists and other innocent civilians in Maguindanao on Monday.

The journalists were to cover the filing of the certificate of candidacy of Buluan Vice Mayor Esmael "Toto" Mangudadatu as well as the families of other victims whose lives, he said, were "taken away by an act guided by neither ideology nor bestowing."

Toto Mangudadatu's wife, two sisters and other relatives were killed, along with lawyers, journalists and other civilians by armed men believed to be working for the Ampatuans.

Ampatuan, the standard-bearer of the Liberal Party (LP), called on the grieving families not to lose faith because "those cold-blooded murderers will be brought to justice."

He added, "There must be an immediate disarmament of all unlawfully armed groups in Maguindanao."

During the same call, Biazon said Malacañang should first focus on the disarming of its allies' private armies, especially in the areas covered by Proclamation No. 1946.

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DUE PROCESS IS A REQUIREMENT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources presents its position on the mining project in Mindoro as regards the following issues raised in an earlier paid advertisement in this paper and subject also of an on-going sit-in demonstration in front of DENR premises:

The recognition of the LGUs' moratorium on mining.

- The DENR recognizes the moratorium, but this is a separate issue. Based on PD1586, the DENR, through the ECC, is mandated to assess the environmental impacts of an environmentally-critical project and prescribe mitigating measures to address these pre-identified impacts, regardless of any existing moratorium.

  The DENR stresses: (a) ECC is a planning tool, not a permit. It is supposed to guide the LGUs and other concerned agencies in the issuance of their permits; and (b) The LGU is responsible for upholding the local moratorium.

The failure of Intex Resources to conduct genuine consultations in the affected communities.

- DENR officials claim that they conducted public hearings in the municipalities of Pola and Mamburao, while Intex Resources conducted consultations and public scoping sessions in the areas of Calapan, San Teodoro, Victoria, Pola, and Sablayan, where the affected communities are located. These consultations/hearings were conducted to generate environmental concerns of the community, not social acceptability.

The steadfast refusal of LGUs to allow the entry of Intex Resources in the areas.

- The DENR respects the position of the LGUs on this matter. The DENR, however, must continue to act according to its mandate.

The sustained rejection and withholding of consent of the legitimate indigenous people to be affected by the mining operation.

- The immediate indigenous peoples such as the Mangyan tribes belonging to the Samahang Apo Diya Kakuyayan Inc. (SADAKI) and the Kanluran Mindoro at Kabilugan ng Mangyan Inc. (KMI), who occupy the actual concession area in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro and Victoria, Oriental Mindoro, claim they gave their consent to the mining project. They also attest that a series of consultations were undertaken by the mining company.

The mining area is located within a watershed.

- According to those who recommended the issuance of the ECC, the mining project is located 25 kilometers from FB Harrison Bird Sanctuary and 36 kilometers from Mt. Iglit-Baco National Park, and thus outside the proclaimed protected/watershed areas.

The failure to consider EIA Review Committee vote.

- The DENR internal review team took careful note of the recommendations of the EIA Review Committee and incorporated these into the contents of the final ECC. However, per Administrative Order 42, the EIA Review Committee acts only on a recommendatory basis. The final decision to issue an ECC lies with the DENR based on a technical and factual evaluation and not – and has never been done – based on votes by Review Committee members.

The issuance of a suspension for 90 days, instead of a cancellation.

- The ECC given to Intex Resources was suspended for 90 days to allow DENR to conduct a thorough investigation of the allegations that the mining project is located in a watershed area and that inadequate local consultations were made. The purpose of the suspension, therefore, is to comply with the requirements of due process by giving parties time to submit evidence to support the allegations.

  If indeed there was malice in the issuance of the ECC, the DENR will not only cancel the ECC but will also hold liable accountable employees who may have violated the process.

  In fact, Secretary Lito Atienza has invited the bishops and governors present during the dialogue to be part of the investigation panel.

- The revocation should only come after a thorough investigation is done and documents presented are studied impartially by the investigation panel.

"Without due process, justice cannot be served. The possible prosecution of malicious and erring DENR employees and the eventual cancellation of the ECC have to be supported by facts, not by mere allegations. Otherwise, our decision may not even be sustained in a court of law." – SECRETARY LITO ATIENZA

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

'We can't call them animals, they are monsters'

COTABATO CITY—A POLITICIAN WHOSE family was targeted in Monday's massacre in Maguindanao described the attackers as monsters, saying his murdered sister and aunt were pregnant.

Esmael Mangudadatu, vice mayor of Buluan, town who is running for provincial governor, also told his wife was brutally assaulted and murdered before being killed in the mass slaughter, which he and police said was committed by his political rivals.

"We can't call him an animal because I have pets and they are tame. So, he is a monster. They are monsters," Mangudadatu told reporters yesterday.

The Buluan mayor was referring to Andal Ampatuan Jr., a member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's ruling coalition who police said yesterday was the top suspect in the massacre.

Mangudadatu said he had sent his wife, three sisters and many other female relatives, to file his certificate of candidacy for governor because he had been warned that it was too dangerous for him to do it himself.

"We sent women because in the Muslim culture you don't hurt women," he said.

His youngest sister was five months' pregnant, while my aunt was late last month in search of pregnancy."

All of his relatives in the convoy were killed, along with two female lawyers and more a dozen journalists, according to police.

CANDLES FOR THE DEAD Journalists and lawyers in Davao City gather on Tuesday to express outrage over the mass murder

Mangudadatu gave a sickening description of his wife's fate.

"My wife's private parts were slashed four times, after which they fired a bullet into it," he said.

"They opened both of her eyes, shot both her breasts, cut off her feet, fired into her mouth. I could not begin to describe the manner by which they treated her."

Only the immediate execution of the Maguindanao's chief of provincial election police could prevent such atrocities.

Chief Supt. Jesus Dio Catadman, the regional police chief whose jurisdiction covers Maguindanao, declined to comment when asked about Mangudadatu's statements.

However, a reporter's aide at the scene of the mass graves told Agence France-Presse-chief on Tuesday that two confirmed woman victims appeared to be pregnant.

Ampatuan has not commented publicly on the allegations. AFP

Ampatuans ousted from ruling party

From page A1

TEODORO

"The Ampatuans were stripped of party membership for their failure to uphold party ideals and principles in their area of jurisdiction, specifically relating to the peaceful, legal and democratic pursuit and exercise of political power," Lakas Kampi president and Interagency Gen. Miguel Zubiri said in a phone interview.

Top officials of the ruling coalition party held an emergency meeting in Pasig City to tackle the fate of the Ampatuans.

The Maguindanao governor is also the provincial chair of the Lakas Kampi CMD, while the ARMM governor is the regional chair.

Gilbert "Gibo" Teodoro, Lakas-Kampi-CMD chair, earlier called for their expulsion from the party.

Zubiri said the Ampatuans "bring both the actual and symbolic heads of the Ampatuan clan, are now considered expelled from the party and relieved of their duties and responsibilities as the party provincial chair for Maguindanao and regional chair for ARMM, respectively."

He also urged the Philippine Humanitarian Police to swiftly solve the massacre in keeping with the call of Teodoro, the administration's standard bearer.

Teodoro, the former defense secretary, made the call for the Ampatuan's expulsion during a visit to Buluan town in Maguindanao, two days after the massacre of at least 57 people, including members of the Maguindanao political clan and several journalists. The victims were seized, and killed by armed men said to be followers of the powerful Ampatuan clan.

Ampatuan Jr

Teodoro came from an ambushing of seven party members in nearby Midsayap town.

In Buluan, Teodoro rendezvous with families of the victims of the worst politically related massacre in the nation's history, according to his statement.

He urged the government to arrest Andal Ampatuan, Jr., who was believed to be behind the massacre, and those believed to be behind the "shameful crime" and disarm all armed groups in the area to prevent an escalation of violence.

Strong gov't action

"The government should take on an equivocal and strong action against the perpetrators of this shamefully crime," he said.

Teodoro succeeded President Macapagal-Arroyo as Lakas-Kampi-CMD chair last week after he was proclaimed presidential candidate of the ruling party in the May elections.

"There's no justification or no idea whatsoever can I come up with or comprehend what makes a person do these things," he said.

Teodoro also urged the government "to discipline and arrest the public officials who should have acted but did not act."

He said the entire country and the whole world was watching how the government would handle the volatile situation in Mindanao, where clan wars are common.

"I urge the government to take strong action to show us an example that crime pays," Teodoro said.

"They should invest the perpetrators who—for inside and close to them and make sure adequate security presence in the area to avoid a repeat of the incident," he added.

He said what had happened to the family of Maguindanao and the journalists "has to be dealt with very firmly because this is a test case not only for the government but for governments to come."

Senior must be done," he added. With a report from Carlo Agustin, Inquirer Mindanao

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Keep Christmas 'simple but meaningful,' DepEd chief tells schools

By Philip C. Tubeza

EDUCATION SECRETARY JESLI LAPUS has instructed schools to keep Christmas "simple but meaningful" this Christmas parties due to the recent calamities that struck the country.

Lapus said schools should even consider cancelling their Christmas parties and donating the funds for these relief missions to calamity victims.

"The difficult economic times call for austerity and simplicity. Much suffering has been experienced, but it should not stop us from ending the year with the spirit of renewed strength and hope," Lapus said.

He noted that the severe difficulties during the past months brought about by the global financial crisis and by the series of typhoons have ruined the Filipinos' resiliency.

"Schools or offices which decide to forego Christmas parties (should) consider donating the savings in relief assistance for families still reeling from the devastation caused by recent calamities," Lapus said.

Devastation should be simple, inexpensive and to the extent possible, profound by students and staff. Violators will face administrative sanctions, he added.

Lapus, through DepEd Order 114 series of 2009, said contributions for celebrations in schools or offices whether to cash or kind should be strictly voluntary.

Moreover, gift-giving should be "guided by the spirit of sharing and should not lead to extravagant spending," Lapus said.

He said Disruption of academic activities in schools and delivery of instructional services should likewise be minimized.

The Christmas break in public schools begins, Dec. 19, 2009. Classes will resume on Jan. 4, Lapus said.

PCGG won't go after $100-M crony property

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION on Good Government (PCGG) is having second thoughts about going after a property estimated to be worth US$100 million owned by a Marcos crony in Texas.

PCGG commissioner Ricardo Abcede said the agency's American lawyers advised them that going after the property of the late Jose Yao Campos would go against the settlement agreement signed between Campos and the government in 1987.

"That was the advice we got from our American lawyers," Abcede said.

He explained that the government had agreed to the settlement agreement that the properties Campos listed in 1987 were the only properties that were supposedly purchased with ill-gotten wealth.

Reneging an agreement

"So, to go after the property would go against the settlement," Abcede said.

Abcede noted that Marcos human rights victims had tried to go after these properties, which are believed to contain oil deposits, located in Victoria County and with an area of more than 4,000 acres. However, the court dismissed their petition.

At this developed, the Sandiganbayan yesterday dismissed the remaining case filed against a former chair of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) accused of being a dummy of the Marcoses, citing the immunity from suit granted to him for being a government witness in several cases against former President Ferdinand Marcos and his wife Imelda.

Case dismissed

In a resolution, the Sandiganbayan 5th Division dismissed the 22-year-old case against Florido Mapa Jr., a co-accused of the Marcoses and Imelda's brother Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez in Civil Case No. 0033, a forfeiture case.

The court found merit in Mapa's motion to dismiss, where he argued that the PCGG had granted him immunity from suit in exchange of his testimony against the Marcoses.

Mapa also said the Supreme Court itself had affirmed PCGG's authority to grant him immunity.

The case filed in 1987 accused Mapa of being a dummy of the Marcoses and Romualdez by allegedly helping them amass ill-gotten wealth.

The court also cited that two cases against Mapa Criminal Case No. 19874 and Civil Case No. 0012-had been dismissed by the Sandiganbayan "based on his immunity."

The court said it had "determined the applicability of Mapa's immunity, both criminal and civil, embodied in the immunity agreements it had with the PCGG and which clearly constitutes a sufficient basis for dismissal of the instant case against him." *With a report from Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

The Daily Gospel

Thursday, November 26, 2009
34th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Dan 6:12-28
Gospel: Lk 21:20-28

Jesus said to his disciples, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you must know that the time has come when it will be desolated as a wasteland. Then, if you are in Judea, flee to the mountains; if you are in the city, leave it, and let those who are in the fields not return to the city.

"For these will be the days of its punishment and all that was announced in the Scriptures will be fulfilled. How hard will it be for pregnant women and for mothers with babies at the breast! For a great calamity will come upon this land, and divine justice upon this people. They will be put to death by the sword or taken as slaves to other nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled upon by the pagans until the time of the pagans is fulfilled. "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish of perplexed nations when they hear the roaring of the sea and its waves. People will faint with fear at the mere thought of what is to come upon the world, for the forces of the universe will be shaken. And at this time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now, when you see this happening, stand erect and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing near."

Commentary

The great miracle in the story of Daniel is the lion's den is that he continued to pray. If we, the people of God, stop praying then we have self-threaten us. The mark of true faith is that we keep praying. It shows that we believe in God more than the world. When it is pitch black all you need is one single light and then darkness no longer prevails. The destiny of the Jews, exiled in Babylon, was demanded by Daniel's prayer. The great battle took place there, with Daniel praying to God. Daniel prayed three times a day. If each one of us prayed as often as he prayed then, we would have prayed more than a thousand times. That will not be easy. Prayer is inconvenient, because there is always something else to do and many things to hinder us. In prayer, there are enemies (habits) that have to be killed, giants (troubles) and rhythms to break down. Yet, prayer is the essential breathing of the soul, without it our soul dies. In prayer we articulate our faith and live it out. (cf. sc.org.ph)

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Vol. 24 No. 351

OPINION

Horror

EDITORIAL

FOUR DAYS AFTER IT HAPPENED, AND THREE days after the first pictures from the gruesome scene were taken, the massacre in Ampatuan, Maguindanao, continues to beggar description. As of press time, the number of bodies recovered from the site has reached 52, many bearing signs of sudden death.

The pictures taken by literature come closest—although closeness is relative—to capturing both the scale of the massacre and its sheer brutality. The vehicles the Mangudadatu party and their protective shield of lawyers and journalists had used on their journey in the provincial election office in Shariff Aguak town are seen clustered together in a partly grassy area, as though someone had decided it was the perfect place to park for a picnic. But the dozen are not, and on the ground, just outside the vans and the SUVs, in the clear sunlight, lie the bloodied bodies of several victims. They look like they never stood a chance.

As it has become traumatically clear in the last few days, they never did.

From the start, the division of the Mangudadatus to contest the governorship of Maguindanao in next year's elections never set well with their relatives, the powerful Ampatuans who have ruled the province since 2001. According to the Mangudadatus chronicles, many armed Ampatuan supporters were seen moving into the area a week before the massacre—that is, before the start of the period for filing certificates of candidacy. Requests from Rahana Vice Mayor Esmael Mangudadatu for both the police and the Army to escort the party that would file his certificate of candidacy for governor were declined. Journalists from Maguindanao found the expedition too risky, and as a result the vice mayor had to depend on journalists from the cities of General Santos and Koronadal in South Cotabato and Tacurong in Sultan Kudarat. And, as happens correspondent Aquilino Zonio has written, in a memorable account of how he and two other journalists narrowly escaped their colleagues' grim fate because of a detour, motorcycle-riding men were shadowing the five-vehicle convoy and asking questions.

The Mangudadatu women, including Esmael's wife and two of his sisters, lawyers Connie Reyes-la and Cynthia Oquendo-Ayan, five drivers and, by Zonio's count, a total of 34 journalists were stood a chance. They had stationed right into a murderous trap.

The pictures offer confirmation. But is why it was important to publish them, in their gory detail. They shock us into realization: The men who did the killing, and the men who ordered it, could only have been either beasts or gods. The utter nonchalessness of the mass murders, the grim shamelessness of it, is the mark of an outstanding animal or a considerateless being—an unreachable, a warlord or his son or his supporter perhaps, who can break human laws because he is a law unto himself.

The unbelievable scale of the atrocity is part of the horror we all feel: the sheer outbreak of elemental violence in the country to memory; the worst loss of life in the history of journalism, ever. No wonder many otherwise reasonable people are starting to wonder whether the country under President Macapagal Arroyo has irrevocably slid down in failed-state status.

But the dehumanization of the victims forms part of the terrible picture too: Unarmed women were sent instead of elected officials with their own retinue of security guards to file one single certificate of candidacy precisely to avoid stirring trouble or adding to the political tension. Only a maddened beast or an unreachable could have killed unarmed women, lawyers and journalists in broad daylight, surrounded by the consequences. Only a bloodthirsty animal or a political god could have seen no difference between killing one person and killing 52.

Not least, the vacuum of reason in the Ampatuan massacre [we should name it after the location of the mass killings] also explains the horror we all feel. Lawyers and journalists can serve as protection only if the hostile party accepts an appeal to reason and moderation; unarmed women can serve as protection only if the hostile party respects the teachings of culture or the great religious traditions. That the victims of the Ampatuan massacre were trying to do the reasonable thing, and still ended up dead, is chilling.

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Whose SOB?

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

MAGUINDANAO IS NO STRANGER TO VIOLENCE. Insurgency, crime and family squabbles that spread into clan wars, or rido, capped the decades. What could have been the country's "Texas/Dallas?" Did the Maguindanao massacre of 33 civilians, including 16 journalists, plumbed new depths of savagery.

"Mas is the ruthless samurai," Friedrich Nietzsche wrote. "At tragedies, bullfights, and crucifixions he has so far felt best on earth. And when he invented hell for himself, behold, that was his very heaven."

The victims in the ambushed five-vehicle caravan were heading for Shariff Aguak. They were in line a certificate of candidacy for Buluan Vice Mayor Esmael Mangudadatu. He planned to challenge Andal Ampatuan for the governor's post.

The women were accompanied by a media delegation, Jess Diaz reported. "They believed they were safe, protected by the Reuters presscription to open women... No one could have predicted the ruthlessness that met the group."

The women were slapped, made to sit Gonzales-Zosa said (sic). Some were run over by vehicles. Others were beheaded, a crime Abu Sayyaf gleefully copied from Japanese World War II soldiers.

Bodies recovered included those of Mangudadatu's wife, Genalyn, his two sisters and four lawyers. They were stranded on the ground about three miles from where they were ultimately found. Dug up in a hilly area covered with mute grass. A protected government backhoe, emblazoned with Governor Ampatuan's name, was parked nearby.

"The murders break all the rules of the blood feuds known as rido in Mindanao," commented Carl Thayer, an analyst who follows terrorism. "Did it now, women, children and old people were never touched in rido." The New York Times news blog quotes journalist Marites Vitug. "But Monday's atrocity has changed all that."

President Macapagal-Arroyo allowed the arming of her allies, like the Ampatuans. Now, she gives for the likelihood of massive retaliation. Those who sow the wind, reap the whirlwind.

Could there now depths of savagery have been foreseen?

Yes, gumboils reply was relentless, Ed. S. Pantilla and Ed. U. Cruz of the University of Southern Philippines. But a computer model is not a substitute for justice and law enforcement, they caution.

Pantilla and Cruz have been studying a computer model that would pinpoint factors that trigger violence in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In the ARMM, 36 percent of disputes, ranging from car smash-ups and divorce, disintegrate to marriage disputes...And so does wars or rebellion.

In 2007, an Asia Foundation study identified 1,266 cases of rido feuds in Mindanao, going back to the 1970s. The report noted, "Out of the total number of rido cases documented, 361 persons remain unresolved, and half of the feuds began since 2000."

Pantilla and Cruz sifted through 2,761 disputes in their paper "Forecasting Incidence of Violent Disputes in ARMM." They found the conditory "triggers" include: (a) the disputants around women, (b) involves municipal or offices in adjoining, usually in Muslim upper classes; (c) the parties are armed (d), somebody caused death to a member of the disputants.

If the parties are also literate, "the probability that a dispute will escalate into rido is 61 percent," Pantilla and Cruz believe. "In human conflict context he overestimated."

Political disputes in fact come behind five other "triggers." Land disputes are the most volatile, followed by theft, conflicts with neighbors, family feuds and marital squabbles.

There is some uncertain in being able to forecast if a dispute will escalate into a violent one. Such capacity would enable one to transverse and defuse conflict, but can we really unravel the complex elements [that cause a dispute to erupt]? Pantilla and Cruz ask.

Perennial setbacks in Mindanao is "extremely misunderstood," they point out. "Stakeholders don't agree on root causes of the problem, hence also its solutions." As a result, armed conflict saps the economic development of the island, and beggars most provinces, particularly those in the ARMM.

Life expectancy in Maguindanao, for example, is 57 years, almost a generation shorter than La Union's 74. Out of every 100 residents, 44 are functionally illiterate. And 45 percent lack potable water. Maguindanao is bordered between Swaziland and Ghana by Philippine Human Development Index.

The ARMM population has grown from 2,803,045 in 2000 to 4,120,795, as reported in the estimated 2007 Census of Population. That means an annual population growth rate of 5.46 percent—almost double national levels.

Ghosts, presumably, were shadows in both rebel groups and clans. Thus, a clan war often escalates into an encounter between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Meeting is to do only one definite conflict.

"They're 1970s. But they are our 1970s." The Arroyo regime must find old cynical yardstick to stay in power. Will the national and international uproar see the Ampatuans become an exception?

Impunity

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE QUESTION IS, "WHY?"

I do not just mean this in the sense of parent motivation. The people who massacred—sorry, less than usual remained more grisly—Toto Mangudadatu's followers on their way to the provincial capitol to file his candidacy obviously did it to prevent him from filing his candidacy. Completely literally, by physically removing the people who were going to do the filing.

I mean "why" in the sense of why they thought this thing could possibly just blow by after it was done. I mean "why" in the sense of why they imagined they could possibly survive the fallout from it. I mean "why" in the sense of how they could possibly have contemplated it at all.

Common sense must tell you that if you wreak havoc of this scale, you wreak havoc on yourself as well, setting in train the dissolution of the forces that have shored it begin to do so the other happened. As of this writing, the death toll has risen to 21. Those are numbers you normally see only during disasters, or wartimes, however, do not top sources. Floods do not machine-gun people in cold blood or behead one people. Those were the things that happened to the group that tried to make their way to the capitol.

Most of the dead were journalists. According to our correspondent in the area, Aquilino Zonio, among the 18 persons in the group, 37 were journalists 16 of them died there, the biggest casualty of journalism in a single act of murderers in the world. Louis himself would have been among the dead, except that he and a couple of others were back for some stuff in their hotel. The killing of the journalists who died by an accident. Eyewitnesses say motorcycles were asking the hotel manager after them.

Just as clearly, the military and police were in on it. Zonio recalls that Toto Mangudadatu had begged Chief Supt. Daniel Linga, provincial director in Maguindanao, and Brig. Gen. Alberto Caber, police regional director, to provide an escort, but was turned down. He begged the Army commander in the province to do the same, but was turned down as well. When the danger was clear and present, his opponent having repeatedly issued manifests on him if he were on to remove the governor's seat. For clearness and purposes, the group had been served up to the cutthroats on a silver platter.

Most mind-boggingly of all, the author of this monstrosity never bothered to hide his hand. Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan, who ran unopposed in 2007 and made his wishes clear. He meant to continue to run unopposed forever. He had made his wishes clear specifically in Maguindanao, proclaiming his succession by graphic descriptions of the consequences that awaited him if he did not heed it. He had done so repeatedly, publicly repeatedly. And as if to prove that he was a man of his word—like a medieval warlord or modern day Idaho don, who thought his position would weaken if he could not back it up with deeds—the massacre happened. Inspect, hell, his signature is written all over it.

Common sense must tell you that if you wreak havoc of this scale, you wreak havoc on yourself as well. But that is common sense for the rest of the world, that is not common sense for that part of the world. For the rest of the world, mounting a massacre of that depth and savagery, massacring the police and military as well, and doing so to make a statement—it's not even doing the world to do something about it, presuming in that does a sense of consequence—is beyond contemplation, to that part of the world, it is, if not entirely par for the course, just pushing the envelope on fulness of terror.

That is the heart of "impunity," a concept so normally associate with wantonness, whim and unwillingness. It is nothing of the kind. It is instead vision in ways that go so at least) addy whole new meanings to the word "unreal." It is unreasonable to a point of blindness. In Ampatuan's reckoning, the equation is simple. Us pure evil of a kind, the point that in the hearts of Islamic rivals, and he will always be protected by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It's not that nothing else matters, it's that nothing else exists.

The truly mind-boggling thing about the massacre is not that it happened, it is that it was contemplated at all. The truly chilling thing about the massacre is not that it left decapitated bodies, it was that it points to decapitated minds.

In the end, you truly have to gape in awe at the price we've had to pay for keeping GMA all those years. The problem in Maguindanao was not that it was long before her, but not to a point where we are looking not just at a different culture, not just at a different country not just even at a different planet but at a different plane of existence. It's a perversion of every truth we hold to be self-evident, not the least of them that the rule is sacred, the public office is sacred, life is sacred. It is perversion so systematic it carries with it its own violent logic: the vow to meaninglessness, the public's utility the wretched's toll, life is puny. There is method in that madness, and there is madness in that method.

In the rest of the world, common sense dictates that you do not reward the murderers by giving them more power with a state of emergency. Common sense dictates that you replace the military and police officials there wholesale, that you send combat troops to disarm [and disarm them if they resist] irregular private armies that you drag Ampatuans in chains to Manila, under heavy guard by PMA cadets, to make sure his escorts are still incorruptible. Hell, common sense dictates that you throw out GMA, knowing that so long as she is there, no justice will happen to Ampatuans. Looking at it this way, we pound will happen in this country for long as she is there, as long will be unleashed that logic from hell called

Impunity

Shattered political peace

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassanova

IN RECENT WEEKS, PEACE IN MINDANAO HAS very much the concern of leaders here and abroad and optimism over its prospects was in the air. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, during her fighting visit here, urged the Philippine government to push the peace process and affirmed that this has the full support of the United States. Earlier this month, my husband and I were invited by Japanese Ambassador Makoto Katsura and his wife Yoriko to dinner at their official residence and the peace process was among the topics of our conversation. The media also reported how some 300,000 refugees, now housed in various evacuee camps in Mindanao, will be able to go home by Christmas, being for them, so that they could return to their homes after the breakdown of the peace process in August 2008.

Last Saturday that yearning for peace was shattered anew in a politically motivated massacre in Maguindanao of over 50, among them women members of a political clan and media representatives who mistakenly thought they could provide safe coverage of the filing of the election papers of the wife of the incumbent governor. The victims were quickly buried in crude mass graves. The massacre has divided the world and given the Philippines a black eye.

* * *

Several things are evident in the Maguindanao tragedy. There's the continuing poverty of the people which makes them easy to exploit by unscrupulous politicians who promise them the moon. There's the inconsistent punishment they have received in the hands of the courts. There's the uncontrolled proliferation of firearms. It has also been noticed that for a long while the two warring factions—the Ampatuans and the Mangudadatus—were very close allies, until the latter decided to run against the overlord of the other. But this happens not only in Muslim areas, but the barkadas in Maguindanao are exceptional.

The most evident of rules many in this country, however, stems from the fact that political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of political dynasties, which feel that this power must be protected and defended even at all cost. Through various administrations, the subdynasty provinces in the Constitution has defied fleeting out, since the time Sen. Benito Soliongo first filed such a bill, only to see it voted down. In a proximity effort to amend the Constitution after 2010, Shwarzenegger must pick for such a law if evidence is to be maintained.

Former Sen. Sergio Osmeña recently denounced what he called the "37 Mafia" surrounding Liberal Party presidential candidate Manny Aquino and the infighting within that coastal him to bolt the party and run as an independent senatorial candidate. Osmeña warned Aquino, whom he promises to support, to be wary of those around him.

Reports of fierce infighting among the various May within the LP have surfaced in the media for weeks now, from before the sudden decision of Sen. Mar Roxas to step down in favor of Aquino. There was talk that former Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile has been close to the Roxas family for years, had objected to it because he felt that Mar was far more qualified to be the LP's top bet. But the Cardinal Sin bloc and the Binay 13 group, especially confronted Roxas to announce their withdrawal of support and their switch to Noynoy Aquino (not wishing at first refused to attend the Club Filipino luncheon, and a loyal luminary had to appeal to him personally to show up for Mar's sake).

* * *

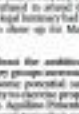
Osmeña's revelations about the ambitious and seemingly power-hungry group surrounding Noynoy have caused some potential supporters to question his ability to exercise proper leadership. Apparently, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Cory Aquino's first internal secretary who's supporting the candidacy of Sen. Manny Villar, cited this danger when he opined that Noynoy lacks "maturity and reasoning." By contrast, it's hard to see how Villar, whose leadership has been severely tested in both chambers of Congress and the private sector, can be manipulated by anyone. Neither can it be said of Liliana Kusiong-bot Gilbert Teodoro, who reportedly pushed for a party reorganization and handpicked Kusiong-bot Gen. Miguel Ermington as vice presidential mate and Chairman Ombudsman Gilbert Francis Manglapus as new secretary-general. Acquire initial grumbling from some party stalwarts.

* * *

From former HMO Chairman Dennis "Tong" Figueroa comes this request to help the former Class '59 Golden Jubilarians celebrate their landmark 50th year: only around a P1.5 million! For elder Ateneo College '59 proposed scholarship endowments for underprivileged but deserving students in college, or a professorial chair in a field the class will choose in consultation with former collection. Figueroa says the class project is timed to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Ateneo's commencement Dec. 12, 2009, of which their class is the Golden Jubilarian class, and the university's "Sesquicentennial celebrations," marking 150 years of Jesuit presence here since their return from exile.

Ateneo College Class '59 is among the most successful: its members include former President Joseph Estrada (even though he didn't graduate from college), former Senate President Jovito Salonga, Ambassador Jose Ingles, former Foreign Secretary Mario Tanopo, the late Senator Soto (Cesar Rafael Bautista) Siazon and former PBOC Chair Antonio Lopez. There are also Supreme Court Justice Adolfo Azcuna, former Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo Jr., Deputy RED Commissioner Cato Revilla, lawyer Fernando Cloma and my brother Roger Olivares, businessman and author of "Bob Ma Tanguin Ji" and other novels. All class members are required to help raise the P1.5 million, which shall be raised and during the Dec. 12 homecoming. Inquiries may be made to class secretary-general Rudy "Rainier" Lavitoria, at 269 Kalipunan Ave., Loyola Heights, QC, or at 0917 527 9218.

Mangyans, mining and betrayal



HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

LOURDES, HUMILITY AND COMPASSION. These, Bishop Broderick Pabillo prayed, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Lito Atienza would have so that he would receive his mission.

Pabillo is chair of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace and auxiliary bishop of Manila, the seat of the bungay millions who joined the Pope and the prayers of Mindanao's opposite large-scale mining in watershed and areas for domestic areas.

Two days into the hunger strike, the anti-mining protesters thought they had scored victory. They had media coverage, Pabillo's visit to urge him to cancel the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) that his office had issued to three companies, a Korean gas mining company, last Oct. 14 despite strong opposition from the Mangyans and the majority of the local government and the Catholic Church.

After the meeting with Atienza, a Mass of thanksgiving was held. Bishops Wilfrido Ugarida and Pabillo concelebrated with some 20 priests on the Antonio Luna Street, DENR. Ateneo Human Rights Center Director Jonathan Malicsi, governors of Mindoro Occidental and Oriental respectively as well as Abigail Pedro Bay Mangyan Dudel, nuns and and among others.

Moments later, they found out that they had been had. Atienza only suspended the ECC for 90 days. This meant that Intex could work a little harder to fulfill the supposed requirements and it would be back in business.

Two days ago, a whole page open letter to Atienza signed by Pabillo came out in the dailies. The bishop's statement, with the backing of seven of Church institutions, questioned Atienza's decision.

"We all felt betrayed," Pabillo said. "If the ECC was acquired with irregularity, why should it be just suspended for 90 days? It is not invalid, and being in the area, we know that all levels of the provincial government, several mayors, congressmen, priests, civic bishops, DENR officials and several Mangyan leaders, you were emphatic about your allegiance to the law and your insistence to project would operate.

Reasons stated showed documents to prove that the issuance of the ECC for Intex had been "last-minute," allegedly by Sec. "from above," in order "to ensure optimum economic growth without delay."

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) system had also been simplified. This was the reason Intex got an ECC without with considerations with communities, the environment.

According to the Mines-based Multisectoral Legislative Watch, "The large-scale mining operations of Intex Resources... may bring about the destruction of a contiguous forest area and can lead to the displacement of several indigenous Mangyan communities in Central Mindoro."

I dread a Haiyandugan like mining disaster that would wreak havoc in the mountains, the seas and the communities in Mindoro.

Mindoro is included in a detailed study on mining in Mindoro, Siburan Island and Mindanao, "Philippines: Mining or bust," (2006) commissioned by seven United National Development agencies and the Government of the Catholic Bishops of Germany. The study was done by Robert Goodland, environmental scientist specializing in economic development, and Clive Wicks, engineering consultant, both former employees of the World Bank's Mining Group on Mining in the Philippines. The study concluded: "Intex and all mining companies should comply with the mining incentives... The mine [Mindoro Mining Project] will be profitable only if the copious mining regulations would be the tropical island, would damage most of the water entitlement areas and the possibility of sustainable food production in the foreseeable future of Mindoro."

I have been to Mangyan territories a number of times. The lands and forests Mangyans are close to my heart. They still adhere to their age old traditions, but they are no longer the myth-ones that Fernando Poe Jr. made them out to be. They now proudly reading the use of their syllable script. A Mangyan college student taught me how to write my name in Mangyan syllable script.

Send feedback to cerespd@gmail.com.

Shattered talismans

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN A NATION WHERE THE FUNDAMENTAL UNITS are opinions, the least useful thing to try to suppress, out, gun, and use spread those who possess a plethora of those things because of political effect, the lack of an effective sword against genocide, and methods to weaponized by the use of these deadly instruments, the media, and lawyers.

Whether it was some clothing rosaries or schoolteachers or simple mothers leaving the women's shelter, or the ordinary people, the unarmed civilians who were killed on some unfortunate instance but often called on some unfortunate instance but often called on some unfortunate instance but often called

Bloody start for 2010 elections

THE UNION OF PEOPLES' LAWYERS in Mindanao (UPLM) condemns in the strongest possible terms the brutal murder of scores of civilians in Datu Mudzlah, Maguindanao, following in a bloody wave for the 2010 elections. Among the hapless victims were UPLM Consultant Enrique "Cesar" Binarao and UPLM member Cynthia Iquiniza.

Authorities said the victims were reportedly abducted by some 100 armed men. They were accompanying the wife of Buliam Vice Mayor Ismael "Toto" Mangudadatu, Genalyn, whose group was on their way to file her candidacy for Provincial Governor at the Commission on Elections office in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

The UPLM demands that justice be served for the sake of the victims, particularly our colleagues, lawyers Brimuda and Oparada. We demand that the Arroyo administration throws the full force of the government to bring the perpetrators, regardless of their affiliations, to the bar of justice.

—ATTY. CARLOS ISAGANI T. MEJIA, secretary general,
UPLM,
National Secretariat, National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL),
23 Scrubtree Bldg., Maaralin corner Matatag Sts., Central Scientific, Quezon City, Philippines

INDIGNATION rally held in Davao City last Nov. 24 condemns Maguindanao massacre.

Nov. 23 massacre: a stab at the heart of Philippine democracy

THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS of the Philippines (NUJP) denounces in the strongest terms the carnage of 57 persons, including 30 journalists, in the province of Maguindanao, the slaughter of whom is considered the worst single attack on the media in the world.

This incident not only erases all doubts about the Philippines being the most dangerous country for journalists, but, coupled with the declaration of martial law in Maguindanao province, it also threatens the democratic space in the country as a whole.

The massacre, which the military has confirmed, was allegedly perpetrated by Shariff Aguak Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr. and police Chief Inspector Sukarno Unas. This goes beyond the issue of freedom of the press and expression and strikes at the very foundations of democracy.

Aside from the mob, relatives and supporters of Esmael Mangudadatu, who were on their way to file his certificate of candidacy to run as governor of Maguindanao, the slaughter also claimed the lives of at least 25 journalists, according to reports from our chapters in Mindanao.

This incident not only erases all doubts about the Philippines being the most dangerous country for journalists, but, coupled with the declaration of martial law in Maguindanao province, it also threatens the democratic space in the country as a whole.

Running for office and voting are acts of democracy that we all must support, not as cowering and repairing the status.

We require nothing less from this government than the swift apprehension and punishment of everyone involved in this gruesome massacre on the national body politic, including the masterminds, regardless of who they might be.

Anything less would mean that the impunity that has characterized those who would silence the critics, including the Arroyo administration's months with the record of having the most number of murdered journalists, has spread to embolden those who would destroy our democracy for their own selfish interests.

—NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS OF THE PHILIPPINES, www.nujp.org,
5th-6 Sweet Lanes Street (near Roxas Avenue), Quezon City.

LETTERS

Politicians urged to take early morning MRT rides

WITH THE ELECTION FEVER IN THE AIR, A lot of our politicians are once again crisscrossing to the pro-poor, pro-environment and pro-economy. Promises are here again and hope for voters with caution.

Like most of our countrymen, I am still in the process of selecting the best candidates to vote for. I usually doubt their motives of being pro-poor when they have their eyes on the prize. I noticed how it is to be poor in the real sense of the word.

Very recently, I took an MRT ride from Cubao to Ayala station and once more for those days, without a hitch, extraordinary experience. The early morning rides were a "taste of the finest" for, I mused never to take another MRT ride again if only to keep my sanity.

I wonder what MRT's top officials are doing. Are they listed as our passenger plight? Can't they do something about it, other politicians enjoy hell's pain and allowances? Have they ever taken an MRT ride? Please, may I plead with them, never ride on trains. Believe me, what is on paper is totally different from the actual sufferings of hapless passengers. As commuters, we don't are deserve a little comfort every time we ordinary tourists, take an MRT ride?

The MRT management needs an overhaul. They can't impose a subsidy measure for having MRT riders and for boarding and de-boarding trains? If by our small sufficient contribution, some air-cond rides running one hour as it is built, can passenger movement? This way, the management will have to employ less manpower, most of the MRT personnel, especially the station need more training. My goodness, they are not even familiar with profiling! I guess they are just there for the sake of passing some semblance of "security" when a wave of financial measures!

I challenge anyone who is aspiring after a public office to do something about our public transport. The public needs a credible transport system for the benefit of the riding public. For a start, they should take an early morning MRT ride without any advance notice and without further like ordinary taxpayers. After taking such a nightmare ride, I wonder if they would hang on to their delusions of being pro-poor, pro-service and pro-country.

—HELEN DOEDOA-MIGUEL
hdmarie@yahoo.com

Mourners smiled in funeral to defy oppression

I READ WITH INTEREST SAMUEL MORATTE'S letter ("[Signs also means losers]," Inquirer, 11/13/09).

Yes, it may have been "only in the Philippines" where political exercises were done during funerals of revered political figures. That, in our humble opinion, is because Filipinos are solemn occasions which even the most hardened dictators cannot dare to prevent people from trying to express their courage against oppression even at the face of the dreaded.

Dictators cannot and would not see mercy! Lets, at that "unlicensed pro-rebellion exercises" (UPRE), no liberal people from mourners together to join the emerging law they carry the ire of an already very angry population whose sensitive moral rights is briefly express their climate have been brutally killed by brute force and by the growing lungs of those counter-rebellion of oppression.

We saw those during the funeral of Ninoy Aquino in the Manila streets and during the funeral of Cory Aquino in the close of Quezon Memorial Avenue.

We believe that some participants in the carnage were smiling because they might have been happy in being able to "demonstrate" without the fear of being arrested, tortured or if unsheltered.

And, Nicolae Ceausescu express his true feeling by ruling his country Romania, not Poland. He and his wife were later chained, and executed without due consideration of the very persistent appeal by an angry people to us brutally suppressed during his reign.

—RAMON REVIRA,
Delikdaypag@aol.com

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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

5 foreign divers, 6 Filipinos rescued at sea off South Leyte

By Jaro Arenas
Inquirer Visayas

MAASIN CITY—ELEVEN MEMbers, including five foreigners, were rescued by the crew of two fishing vessels several hours after their boat capsized at 8 a.m. Tuesday off Limasawa, South Leyte, at the height of Tropical Depression Ondoy.

Chief Petty Officer Maximo Daniel, Maasin Philippine Coast Guard station commander said the motor launch, MBCA, Lady Coco, left Maindalirian, Bohol, for a diving expedition at Limasawa at around 3:30 a.m. on Tuesday.

The motor launch capsized at around 8:00 a.m. Tuesday off Limasawa when one of its outriggers broke due to the huge waves, Daniel said.

Daniel identified those rescued as Thomas Burgi of Switzerland, Gabi Gitz, Marcus Offermann, Patrick Hohoma and Cristine Hilbrich, all of Germany, and Filipino crew members Reynaldo Bandoy, Gulaid Hisbe, Emmanuel Oberio, Angel Olayres Daniel Logronio and Dennis Olayres.

When the boat capsized, the six crew members and five foreign divers managed to board a rubber boat but its outboard motor fell off due to the big waves, he said.

Daniel added that the victims were rescued more than five hours later at around 1:30 p.m. the afternoon when the crew of two fishing boats saw them floating at sea and brought them to Barangay Magallanes in Limasawa under the care of village chief Ronnel Gabriel.

He also said he would not say why the motor banca was allowed to sail when there was a tropical depression. He explained that regulations allowed only vessels of more than 1,000 gross tonnage to sail whenever storm Signal No. 1 is raised in the vessels' port of origin, route and destination.

However, Daniel clarified that the Coast Guard did not have a station in Ormoc Bay.

He said at least 253 passengers, 6 cargo trucks and 20 motorcycles remained stranded in Maasin, Bato and Liloan ports.

The accident spurred Sen. Loren took clashes in Libay, Pilapil and President Garcia routes in Bohol and in Calapan in Mindoro.

In Liloan, Southern Leyte, 52 families were evacuated to the Gabi-elohan village hall after a landslide hit the area at around 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday. Liloan Mayor Rodrigo Chiong said in a text message sent yesterday.

No one was hurt, Chiong said.

Lapids ordered: Answer plunder raps

CITY OF SAN FERNANdo—The Office of the Ombudsman found the plunder case filed by Gov. Eddie Panlilio against Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, his son Mark and three former capitol officials to be "sufficient in form and substance."

The order came five months after Panlilio filed the plunder suit in connection with the provincial government's loss income from the sand quarrying industry during the Lapids' terms as governors.

It also came as the elder Lapid filed his certificate of candidacy as senator under the administration Lakas-Kampi-CMD ticket, obtaining his bid for a new term as Pampanga governor.

Panlilio alleged that the five officials should have remitted P699 million to the capitol coffers from 2002 to 2007.

10-day deadline

The Lapids, former provincial administrator Fidel Aycinena, former provincial treasurers Zoilo Salcedo and Virgil Tablac were directed to file within 10 days their counter-affidavits and affidavits of their witnesses.

The order, dated Nov. 12, was signed by Mary Antoinette Lee, director of the Ombudsman's Preliminary Investigation, Administrative Adjudication and Review Bureau.

Aycinena, who used to speak on behalf of the Lapids, could not be reached for comment on Wednesday.

The provincial capitol received the order on Wednesday, or a day after the Office of Administration said it had collected P500,649 million in quarry revenues from June 30, 2007 to Nov. 24, 2009.

Highest collection

It is the highest collection on record, beating the combined income of P115 million under the Lapid administration from 1998 to 2004 and the P385 million under the Mayard Nonoy-led Development Corp. of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources from 1999 to 2001.

Panlilio said the current income, drawn from the payments of 33 quarry operators, has set a "benchmark for future provincial government managers."

The provincial government charges P500 per truckload of sand and gravel. At least P150 is set aside for reforestation projects. The rest goes to the share of the provincial government, 13 towns and 38 barangays from where the sand is taken.

The capitol has distributed P468.8 million to local quarry owners.

In a press briefing, Panlilio said he signed the provincial board's scrap Ordinance No. 176, through which the Pampanga Mayors' League demanded that the whole amount of P500 be given as shares of towns where the sand came from.

At least P182 million of the P500,428 million has been deposited in a bank because the court granted Panlilio's plea to temporarily stop the implementation of the ordinance. *Nestorio Dungca, Inquirer Central Luzon*

DAVAO MOURNING
Journalists, lawyers and civil society group members light candles and offer prayers at a rally in front of the Centennial Park in Davao City, to condemn the murders of more than 40 people in Maguindanao, including at least 28 journalists. MIKE ALQUINTERO/INQUIRER MINDANAO

Vilma formalizes entry into Noynoy party

BATANGAS CITY—BATANGAS Gov. Vilma Santos-Recto and other provincial and local officials took their oaths as members of the Liberal Party (LP) at the capitol compound on Tuesday.

Presidential aspirant Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III led the formal oath-taking ceremonies.

The list of guests in the ceremonies were a virtual who's who in Batangas and Philippine politics.

They included Vice Governor Levinia, who is seeking reelection; Ralph Recto, Rizi Hontiveros, Ruffy Biazon, Franklin Drilon and PCI Ongpin who are aspiring for senatorial seats, and 200 others running for congressional, mayoral and vice mayoral posts.

Supporters led by San Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan, Batangas 2nd District Rep. Hermilando Mandanas and celebrities Shaina Guevara and Kris Aquino were also present.

A crowd of about 15,000 watched the oath-taking ceremonies.

Most were seen holding and waving yellow flags while cheering for those big personalities Kris and Shaina.

Jumbo Recto said in his speech that the farfloat offers for her to run for vice governor, because she wanted to focus on Batangas and continue her projects and programs in the province.

Ralph, whose entry into the LP drew intense tension Jorge Osmeña out of the party, said he and Vilma's decision to join LP came after a series of consultations with previous mates.

Drilon hailed LP and the party's senatorial ticket to protect the many of the Bicol people. Marvyn Erebo Jandog, Inquirer Southern Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

BAGUIO CITY

New elders' law pushed

DISCOUNTS enjoyed by senior citizens could rise from 20 to 30 percent next year to offset the impact of value-added tax (VAT) on these benefits.

San Pio Cayetano had been consulting senior citizens' groups in Northern Luzon, seeking full work with a meeting in La Union, about proposals to amend Republic Act No. 7432 (the law which grants special considerations to senior citizens) in order to exempt these benefits from VAT coverage.

Because of these, senior citizens end up making purchases using only 12 percent of their discount incentives because the excess of (removal) cannot be already deducted from (not...) the card.

Cayetano is leading the crafting of the Senate version of a bill that would amend the existing law and would be known as the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2009.

The Department of Finance has agreed in principle to propose a 30-percent increase in senior citizens' discount instead of VAT exemption. Cayetano told the businessmen last week.

Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

CITY OF MALOLOS

Bulacan pols, LP merge

THE LIBERAL Party on Monday formed an alliance with Del Pilar, a local party in Bulacan composed of former members of the administration-allies Lakas-CMD and Kampi led by former Gov. Josefina dela Cruz and her brother, incumbent Gov. Joselito Mendoza.

At least 200 officials from 20 towns and two cities in Bulacan, all wearing yellow shirts, and their supporters gathered at the provincial gymnasium for the Monday afternoon LP leaders, led by Sen. Benigno Aquino III, formalized the alliance with Del Pilar.

"Our common bond is hope. This is for an unseen ceremony where we only exchange vows. It's a binding of our hearts. I do not know that local parties are joining us," Aquino told the assembly.

Carmela Reyes
Inquirer Central Luzon

TACLOBAN CITY

Palay dryers delivered

THE INSTALLATION of 69 flatbed mechanical dryers in Eastern Visayas by the Department of Agriculture will help cut down harvest losses of rice farmers in the region by improving the quality of harvested palay.

Wilfo Casumpangan, chief of the DA regional office's agricultural engineering division, said 27 dryers were installed last year while the first phase of the program was set for this year.

The DA said in the past, farmers had to dry their palay on road pavements, which had resulted in losses of 5.7 percent of total harvest.

The use of dryers would ensure a good quality of palay, reduce losses and reduce dependence on good weather. *Tapanguhan Gil*

Rizalito Lubos, Inquirer Visayas

Suspense in Pampanga: Will GMA, Among Ed run?

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Will President Macapagal-Arroyo run as Pampanga representative? Will Gov. Eddie Panlilio and Lito Lapid fight again in the gubernatorial race? Will Pampanga, in a reelection of Lakas-Kampi-CMD, stay intact in the run-up to 2010?

Six days to the last day of filing of certificates of candidacy (COCs), nothing is certain yet except that Pampanga may turn out to be among the most-watched places in the 2010 national elections.

As of Wednesday, there was no definite word about Mr Arroyo's political plan in Pampanga's second district.

But reports going around the district claimed the would file her CoC at the Commission on Elections (Comelec) here on Saturday.

The reasons for Arroyo's interest on account of accompanying Philippine president possibly sliding down to become a member of the House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, it is still quiet in the camps of former Pampanga Gov. Lilia Garcia Pineda, Solgado and David have been cleared as the possible opponents of Mrs Arroyo in the second district.

What is clear is that an electronic engineer has stepped out to contest the congressional seat.

Feliciano Fermin, 55, filed his CoC shortly before the close of office hours at the Comelec here on Monday.

"It doesn't matter if Mr Arroyo is my rival. I'm ready," said Fermin in a telephone interview on Wednesday.

A registered voter in Barangay Dapdap Balibon in Bacolor town, Fermin is running as an independent candidate.

The gubernatorial race created out Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid on Wednesday as he capitol to run for senator again.

Sen calls for former Board Member Lilia Pineda, who lost to Panlilio in 2007, to run again for governor were aired on Wednesday.

Three presidential hopefuls — Independents Lolita Flores and 10 private sector leaders published the statement "It chance to serve" in at least three local dailies. Ernesto Dugan, manager Central Luzon

SUPPORTERS of Lakas-Kampi-CMD standard bearer Gilbert Teodoro make their presence felt in Pampanga on the first stamp of Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III's presidential campaign. FRANCIS W. MACEDA/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

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Website: www.inquirer.net/region

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Florante G. Solmerano

Amazing cycling race for Mt. Makiling rehab

By Maricar Cinco
Los Baños, Laguna

EQUIPPED ONLY WITH A compass, biking enthusiasts pedaled through Mt. Makiling to complete the 73 pit stops in a 45-kilometer race up and down the mountain.

Eleven pairs of mountain bikers from Manila, Bulacan, Cavite and Laguna joined the Magnifig Quest, an adventure competition that was started in 2002 by the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems-University of the Philippines Los Baños (MCME-UPLB) and the municipal government.

"We used to have celebrities and reporters in other races like an 'Amazing Race' (a popular reality game show) where they had to complete challenges before they could proceed to the next stop," said organizer Roberto Coronel.

On Nov. 21, the race required not only stamina but also mental ability in a merger of mountain biking and orienteering. It also coincided with the 19th anniversary of the proclamation of Mt. Makiling as a forest reserve for science and research study.

Makiling, a perennially active volcano rising 1,090 meters above sea level and covering 4,044 hectares in the towns of Los Baños and Bay (towns) and Calamba City in Laguna and Sta. Teresa (town) in Batangas, is the only intact forest reserve in the country.

"We want to promote Mt. Makiling as an ecotourism destination, for hiking and bird-watching," he added.

Makiling suffered grave damages wrought by Typhoon "Milenyo" (International name: Xangsane) in 2006. Hundreds people residing in the mountain died and the damaged trails have yet to be completely restored.

Coronel said Milenyo was considered the worst typhoon to hit Makiling, dumping 900 ml of rainfall in two hours. In September, Tropical Storm "Ondoy" (Ketsana) rained 400 ml of water in eight hours.

MOUNTAIN bikers participating in this year's Magnifig Quest pilot the bicycle in order to reach the next control point at the 45-km race course. MARICAR CINCO

The normal rainfall there is only at 2,500 ml per year.

"With Ondoy, we have once again proven its worth as a forest reserve," Coronel said.

The mountain acts like a sponge that absorbs the rainfall before the water is gradually released through the tributaries, thus preventing flash floods and landslides in the lower areas, he said.

If not for its presence, Los Baños and Bay towns, and Calamba would have been totally washed out as the catchment of Ondoy.

"With these changes in Mt. Makiling that is already in its primary state, how much more could have happened to other forests? That's why we also want to create public awareness. While they're enjoying nature, people are being educated (on forest preservation)," Coronel said.

The funds raised from the registration fees and sponsorships will be used to rehabilitate the mountain trails, he said.

The bikers also had their share of the rain by each planting a tree sapling at the Agila base, the final pit stop closest to the highest peak, before heading back to the starting point at the UP College of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Overturns

The race was designed through a global positioning system with 15 control points designed by the UP Outdoor Recreation Group (UPORG) and the UP Orienteerers.

In each stop, the bikers were only given the bearing, or does indicating degrees and distance to the next control point. The control points or pit stops were placed at random spots.

"If they were good navigators, they could crunched afternoon," said Dr. Abe Padilla, a professor at UP Manila and member of UP-ORG.

Which earlier Coronel, 27, and her male partner were the first to hit the finish line.

Cardova, who is from Manila, is a member of the Philippine Mountain Biking Forum. She regularly bikes since 2006.

"It was my first time (in Makiling and) I enjoyed it," she said, despite stumbling on the spot down the rocky trail.

Padilla said the entire leg was expected to be completed in three hours, but the actual race took the participants six hours.

Only five teams completed the course. Organizers had to call the race at 7p.m. as fog began to cloud the trail and dump rains.

Some bikers collapsed, while others got lost.

"We had overturns. We got lost in the second and third control points because we went to the opposite direction of the trail," said Chris Fangan, 28, of the mountaineering group from Ateneo Institute of Technology.

Sunday Ondoy, 30, and his partner Kristine Tenio, 41, who are members of the Makiling Campus Runners based in Los Baños, won third place despite being second overturns and a piece of paper on rather that even surrounded the organizers.

"This is not only a race, but it also has an environmental [advocacy]," said Padilla.

"We are joining again (next year)," said Cordova, after beating the rest of the male bikers.

"BLOOMING CIRCLE," an acrylic painting by Jhonly Lazara, won first place in the college level of Bicutan's art contest. PHOTO COURTESY OF JHONLY LAZARA

Students depict climate change in paintings, photos

By Clarice Colling Palumbarit
Los Baños, Laguna

ARTISTIC DEPICTIONS OF THE CAUSES AND effects of climate change in their artworks show that the phenomenon is a significant and urgent concern to all.

For the children and youth who joined and won in an on-the-spot painting contest on the subject, climate change is easily understood and depicted in their pieces, especially since they themselves witnessed the devastation wrought by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" and Typhoon "Pamil" in their provinces.

Eighty-six young people in the elementary, high school and college levels in Laguna and Cavite joined the contest organized by the Los Baños-based Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Seameo) as part of its climate change awareness campaign.

A four-hour Asia-wide photo contest depicting community-based climate change adaptation in the region was also held.

The winners received their awards during Seameo's 42nd founding anniversary on Nov. 20.

Flood victims

Jayson Cristobal, 16, a senior student of the Calamba Bayside National High School, said his own experience of Ondoy helped him create a good painting.

His school, he said, had to evacuate twice to the swollen Laguna de Bay spillway over the campus. Water is still waist-deep and the students are sharing rooms with those of a nearby elementary school.

Cristobal's home in a lakeshore barangay in Calamba City was also knee-deep in floodwaters.

"Our situation is difficult because chairs in the school were destroyed and we may get sick. Our learning is affected because we had to classes for weeks after the typhoons and we are still holding Saturday classes," he said.

Cristobal won first place in the high school level of the contest, with his acrylic "Hooglaw" showing a thirsty-looking earth in an hourglass.

Students of the Philippine High School for the Arts were awarded third place.

"Our artworks can help because others can see what will happen if nature continues to be destroyed," Cristobal said.

Anna Valerie Corre, a Grade-9 pupil of the University of Perpetual Help-Calamba, won first place in the elementary level. She also witnessed flooding in her village in Cabuyao town.

Water rose knee-deep at the height of Ondoy because the canals were clogged with garbage, Corre said.

"I see people throwing garbage in the river and canals. I tell them, including my classmates, to stop but they do not listen to me," she said.

Her painting depicted what she saw, including people protecting themselves fishing.

When asked what she thought caused the floods, second-placer Kathyn Mirasa Bubia, a Grade 3 pupil of the Little Jesus Learning Center, said: "Whenever there is a flood in our place, people say trees and rain (here) for destruction."

The winning college students pointed to the proliferation of factories and vehicles that emit carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as culprit of climate change.

Calls

Harold Arcantos Quezada, 10, a Grade-5 pupil of the Laguna Elementary School, said people carrying trees had caused the landslides.

"Mother Earth is like a young plant that should be taken care of and cleaned so it wouldn't be destroyed. For every trash we throw, we kill something else," Dalisay said.

Elizabeth Basatine, a Grade-2 teacher and coach of Quezada, said she appreciated the activity because it leads children aware of the environmental problems and also boosted their morale.

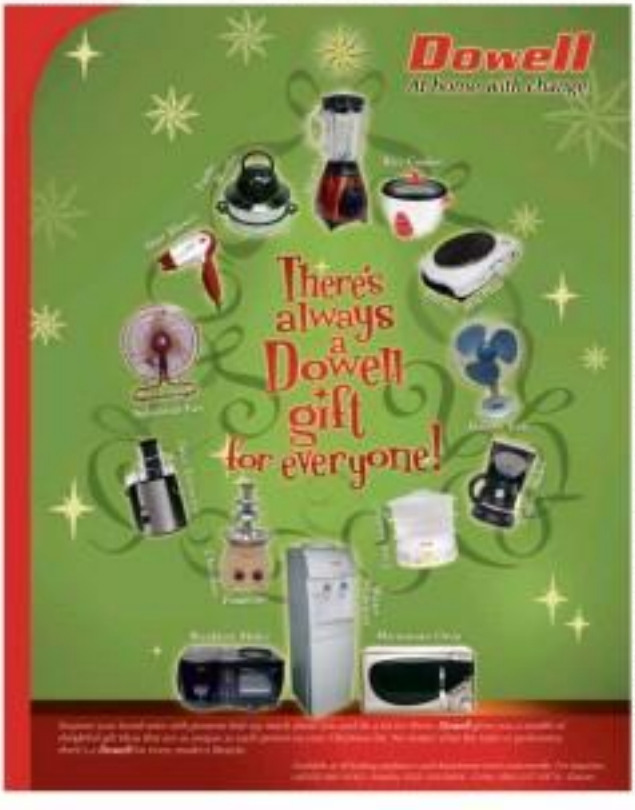
Quezada's work was given as a token to Education Secretary Jesli Lapus, who was a guest speaker during the awarding ceremonies.

Basatine said the students were aware of the effects of climate change because they had exercises in their school and were also victims of flooding. "Farmers and fish dwelling on climate change can also help increase awareness of children on the issue as they understand it more."

In the photo contest which attracted 130 entries from five countries, two Filipinos and one Thai emerged as winners.

Nikki Sandino Nicolasora, a professional photographer based in Antipolo City won first place with her photo showing a farmer preparing bamboo seedlings, which help rejuvenate degraded lands because they absorb more water.

The other winning photos showed workers mowing bags of sand in strengthen the forward wall and flood-defense barrier of a temple on the east bank of the Chao Phraya river in Thailand, and the bicycle lane developed by the Marikina City government to encourage the use of bicycles.



Kin grieve over murder most foul

From page A1

Southern Funeral Homes, service.

Ray Salsong studied a print hung above the shirt and a pair of black trousers for his eldest brother Ian, publisher of this manager. Today, a weekly publication based in General Santos City.

"So that even in his coffin, he'd look dignified," Ray said. He managed to put up a smile but his baggy eyes conveyed pain.

Ian, 48, bore three bullet wounds in the chest and stomach.

Shoe story

Ray's hopes for him vanished after he saw his brother's old black leather shoes worn by someone lying in a pool of acid blood, alongside purse images of murdered journalists. He smiled incessantly.

That Monday, Ray said, Ian woke up at 4 a.m. to prepare for the journey to Maguindanao. "It was unusual for him to pray, sing a praise song 'In Moments Like This' and his house for full votes. I think that was a positive sign that we all should accept."

Ian had every reason to relieve, Ray said, knowing that his brother would go the right/left place where every dead people should go.

The journalist left a wife and three children. His body will be brought to General Santos City.

Difficult take

For Allan Cachuela, however, it was not easy to accept the fate of his brother Manfred or "Bal."

For 20 years, Bal, 51, served as the Maguindanao bureau chief for Panay, a daily newspaper based in General Santos City and was involved with other local newspapers in the region.

"It's difficult to take what had happened to my brother. Only intimate can do such a cruel act," Allan said.

Bal's body was peppered with bullets in the head, stomach and leg.

Estranged from his wife for 14 years, Bal left a 19-year-old son and the memory of a kind-hearted, light-spirited man. "He was generous. Whoever would come and ask for financial assistance, he always had a hand for them," Allan said.

Bal even confided that he would run for congressman in South Cotabato as an independent. "He had a huge following here, especially those he had helped. He had not lost anyone," his brother said.

Own marketing people

Freddie Balindo had five employees in his local weekly, Periodico. They were Rannie Ilagan, Art Vella, Jobo Castillon, Ney Merino and Noel Oreveza.

"They did not ask for pension since from me that they joined the Maguindanao coverage to Maguindanao," Freddie said. "My staff, mostly under the marketing unit, had no business there ... [unless they were trying] to get paid advertisements from the politicians."

Periodico mainly relies on paid ads, from which his staff could get as much as 30 percent to commission, a whole of page costs P8,000.

"It was never part of their job to join the convoy, but the people behind the murders do not even have the right to claim the lives of the fourth estate," Balindo said.

Balindo, who also chairs the South Cotabato Print Media Association, that has 15 papers across the province as members, said he would never get tired of running the business despite losing its key people.

"We call for impartiality of the investigation. Jail the guilty. We don't want another repeat of a mass murder happening in our midst. We should be together to this effort so not the country of machetism," he added.

3 shelters

In Bacolod City, three mayors will no longer get the chance of serving their fathers' alive after 17 years.

Former governor of ARMM Candidato, who was among those killed on Monday, had 5th Barangay Commerce, Binalbagan, Negros Occidental, for Mindanao after he and his wife separated.

"He promised that he would come to Negros in December so that we could finally meet him. I was looking forward to seeing him and despite reports that he was killed, I was still hoping that he is still alive," said Amnara's daughter, Princess, now 20.

Princess said she and her sisters—Jeenan, 21, and Ella, 17—had longed to meet their father, but they got in touch only in April.

Two other massacre victims were from Bacolod. Bart Mercurio, 46, of Barrio Fatalo-Estrosalid, was from Purok Mangana 90, Barangay 6, while lawyer Concepcion Rotairela, the daughter of Alfonso Arine, had practiced her profession in Bacolod.

Rotairela studied at La Consolacion College in Bacolod and at Silliman University in Dumaguete City, and finished her degree at the University of Manila. Her relatives, Carlos Rotairela and former Mor Manuel Ramiro Garcia, said on Thursday.

Active in community

Two other women victims—Gemelyn Mangudadatu, wife of Vice Mayor Ismael Mangudadatu of Buluan town in Maguindanao, and Purlya Mukamad—were active in community projects, including the Ground Kalinga housing for the poor, according to Buluan Mayor Ayunan Sinsuat who has also partnered with the OR.

"It is really a big loss, and sad news for us who are ICE partners in local government," Sinsuat said. With reports from Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas, and Allison M. Lopez in Manila

UN condemns mass murder; RP beats Iraq

From page A1

spired to bring justice and to hold the perpetrators accountable," Bar said.

With the deaths of at least 13 journalists in Monday's massacre, the Philippines has earned the dubious distinction as the world's most dangerous place for media workers, according to an international media watchdog.

Most dangerous place

The Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said the Philippines had effectively supplanted Iraq as the most dangerous place for journalists.

"At least 74 journalists have been killed during the eight-year tenure of the Macapagal administration[,] but not since the end of the reform of impunity in Iraq come, only four convictions had been secured," the IFJ said in a statement.

Before the massacre, the New York-based monitor Committee to Protect Journalists ranked the Philippines as the fourth deadliest country for journalists in terms of reporters' deaths for 2009. In recent years, the Philippines got as far as the second most dangerous place before Iraq.

However, Monday's killings are the Philippines' highest for media, Iraq and Pakistan into the top spot.

Also in New York, Human Rights Watch expressed "deep concern" on President Macapagal-Arroyo's ties to the political family allegedly behind the murders.

"Far too many people have been gunned down in the Philippines while President Arroyo has sat on her hands," Elaine Pearson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

Mid-east question: Amputees

Pearson said members of the Ampatuan family should be "questioned" in an independent investigation, preferably conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) after police and military supposedly took part in the carnage.

"Ampatuan family members should be questioned by the National Bureau of Investigation, not having them questioned by presidential advisers," Pearson said, making reference to presidential adviser Jesse Robredo's meeting with Governor Ampatuan the other day in Maguindanao.

Pearson said that extrajudicial killings would continue in the Philippines until "they are competently, transparently and impartially investigated, and perpetrators, including members of security forces, are fully prosecuted."

US Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney said "such barbaric acts violate the most fundamental principles of human rights and democracy."

Kenney said "a thorough, rapid and transparent investigation must be conducted, and those responsible must be brought to swift justice."

British Ambassador Stephen Lillie also condemned the killings and called on the police authorities to immediately act on the perpetrators.

"Effective action will be crucial in maintaining confidence in the Philippines' commitment to protect human rights," Lillie added.

Clear commitment

IFJ general secretary Aidan White said the Arroyo administration "must make a clear and unequivocal commitment to an immediate, independent and effective inquiry into this atrocity."

He said the IFJ was "determined to keep an international focus on this crime. It is a systematic and horrifying incident that means all journalists must now take even greater care."

The IFJ is supporting pleas by the International News Safety Institute to organize urgent safety training for local journalists, the group said.

"We extend our deepest sympathy and condolences to the families and colleagues of all those killed in Maguindanao," said White.

The IFJ also pledged its full support to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), which is sending a mission to Maguindanao to investigate the circumstances around the killings, to provide immediate support to the families of the victims, and to assess the security failings and safety needs for the region.

"The IFJ has made available its International Safety Fund to provide humanitarian support," it said.

A group of Catholic bishops and Muslim religious leaders in Mindanao said both the Islamic and Christian faiths condemn abductions and killings in whatever form.

"We grieve with the families of the victims, offer our prayers for the eternal repose of the innocent souls and call upon the authorities to squarely address this atrocity," Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla said in a statement on behalf of the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC).

The bishops said the unprecedented brutality of the massacre marked their "humble but painstaking efforts to build harmony and understanding in Mindanao."

The BUC is an interfaith forum for Mindanao bishops and Muslim religious leaders aimed at promoting peace and development.

Crime against humanity

The National Ulama Conference of the Philippines (NUCP) said the brutal killings was a crime against humanity and against the law of Allah.

"The act inflicted was not a show of strength and powers but a manifestation of cowardice and the absence, if not an outright denial, of the rule of law," the NUCP added.

In Davao City, women from various walks of life expressed their outrage over the gruesome death that befell at least 21 women who were among the more than 50 victims in the massacre.

Yesterday was the commemoration of the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women, an annual tribute to the blighted sisters who were brutally killed by Dominican Republic dictator General Trujillo on Nov. 25, 1960.

Women rights advocates on Wednesday marched to the streets of Davao to condemn the violent deaths of the women.

Scared, angered

Nancy, a store attendant in downtown Davao, said she was both scared and angered when she heard the news that some of the victims of the carnage, which is linked to the Ampatuans, family, were even actually abused before they were killed.

The Mindanao Commission on Women and Mothers for Peace also expressed its outrage over what it called "new low in brutality perpetrated by men on civilians but most especially on women."

Indignation march

Media practitioners in Quezon province displayed a two moment of solidarity in an indignation march held Wednesday morning in Lucena City in protest of the brutal killings of their colleagues.

More than 100 journalists marched the march at the patio of St. Ferdinand Cathedral, carrying tarpaulin streamers with the words "Justice for victims of Maguindanao massacre! Stop killing journalists!"

The indignation march was part of the simultaneous protest activity being staged by NUJP chapters all over the country. Jaime Bueta, NUJP-Quezon chapter, said.

Quezon journalists also in white muslin with black ribbons on the sleeves of their left hand, the patron saint of the city.

Aside from the NUJP-Quezon, other media groups that participated in the indignation rally are the Quezon Tri-Media Group, United Media Organization, Camp Nakar Press Corps and Southern Luzon Command Press Corps.

Also yesterday, members of the League of Filipino Students marched on Mendiola in Manila to denounce the killings.

In Quezon City, the Universities of the Philippines administration said the massacre not only represented the state of things in the Maguindanao province, but also the state of the country as a whole.

Ma. Christina Gonzon, president of the Students' Christian Movement of the Philippines, said "the Arroyo administration has failed again and again not only in protecting the citizenry against lawless elements, but also in accounting for human rights violations."

The National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections urged the Commission on Elections to declare a gun ban and dismantle private armies immediately to prevent another massacre. Reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Alexis Tepa, Nikko Dizon, Jerry E. Esplanada and Rosalina L. Alcaraz in Manila; Joella T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon; and Jeffery M. Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao

A MOTHER'S TEARS Concepcion Brizuela's cousin Kirsten weeps. The coffin is sealed because bullets tore the corpse's face beyond recognition. (RAFFY LERMA/INQUIRER PHOTOGRAPHER)

CHILD of the victims was frustrated in her hands and behind her back.

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Velasco files appeal with CA

Reversal of libel conviction urged

By Tina G. Santos

A GOVERNMENT PROSECUTOR who was convicted of libel charges filed against him by a judge has elevated the case to the Court of Appeals.

"We have filed our notice of appeal to the [appellate court] on the very day the decision was handed down. ... Thus, the decision of the Manila regional trial court was immediately executed and hence there is no restitution yet," Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco told the Inquirer yesterday.

On Sept. 11, Manila RTC Branch 17 Judge Edmundo Peralta Jr. found Velasco guilty of the libel charges filed against him by Caloocan City Judge Adoracion Angeles.

Aside from being sentenced to a maximum of one year, eight months and 20 days in prison, Velasco was also ordered by Peralta to pay Angeles a P1,000 fine and P50,000 in moral damages.

The libel suit was based on Velasco's statements to media in which he accused former Judicial Inventory Advocate Baquiro of meddling in the disbarment case filed against Angeles.

Velasco was the prosecution in the case. His conviction was subsequently upheld

YESTERDAY, A24

Surrender, NBI director tells prober

By Tina G. Santos

NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI) Director Nestor Mantaring yesterday urged one of the bureau's investigators who was accused of killing two of his neighbors to give himself up.

Mantaring told Saul Hermano, a special investigator assigned to the NBI legal division, should come out and face the allegations leveled against him.

"I was told that he has not reported for duty since the incident happened. It will be better if he comes out and answers the charges against him," he added.

The Mandaluyong police have launched a manhunt for Hermano who allegedly shot dead his neighbors, Nole Dimaapi and Edmundo Tilang Tillego, at around 9:45 p.m. on Nov. 15.

Based on a police report, Hermano got drunk when the victims, who were drinking in front of Dimaapi's house in Bakakeng Village 2, Mandaluyo City, taunted him for being "under de saya" (henpecked). Ex-mayor's widow has denied the story, saying the two were shot without any provocation.

The report said Hermano shot the two men repeatedly and then fled. The victims were taken to the Medical Center in Mandaluyo where they were pronounced dead on arrival.

The police have filed two counts of murder against Hermano in the Mandaluyo Prosecutor's Office.

Over 40 Pasig officials leave Lakas, join Villar's NP

By Beverly T. Mendoza

MORE THAN 40 OFFICIALS in Pasig City yesterday left the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD party to throw their support behind Sen. Manny Villar, the presidential candidate of the Nacionalista Party (NP).

The officials were led by Pasig Mayor Robert Eusebio and Vice Mayor Ronaldo "Boying" Martinez who were sworn in as NP members in a ceremony held at the city's Tanghalang Pasigueño.

Villar, meanwhile, said that more local officials in Metro Manila were expected to do best in his party before the elections next year.

"There are still many people [joining] the party. Surprise na lang (It will be a surprise)," the senator said when reporters asked him to identify some of the officials.

Leadership skills

Eusebio told reporters that he and the other city officials joined the NP because they strongly believed in Villar's leadership abilities.

He added that although former Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, the presidential candidate of the ruling party, was his close friend, he said the others chose to side with Villar.

"We think it is only right to give our support to the one who has the capability to lead the country. The country deserves someone with experience," Eusebio said.

He added that he and the other city officials believe that Villar could help Pinoy reach its economic goals beyond 2013.

Eusebio was a member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Kampi party for two years.

Boost to party

Villar, for his part, said the inclusion of Pasig City officials in the NP has strengthened the party.

In the last few weeks, prominent members of the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD party have been defecting to other parties.

They included Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and his vice mayor, Herbert Bautista, and Caloocan Mayor Enrico "Recto" Echiverri who all joined the Liberal Party.

SEEN AMONG Villar movers is more than 40 Pasig City officials into the Nacionalista Party. The officials, former members of the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD party, were led by Mayor Robert Eusebio. NELSON GARCIA

Ampatuans' abuse of power blows up in GMA's face

A MALACAÑANG INSIDER TOLD me that President Gloria Arroyo and based hours after the was informed about the massacre in Maguindanao, instead of ordering the arrest of the Ampatuans.

In a study, the Ampatuans — Unós, governor of the autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and his father, Maguindanao Gov. Andal Sr. — the alleged masterminds in the 57 shamefully massacred are no longer be arrested without a state warrant since the prescribed 24-hour period had lapsed.

The President was told the Ampatuans could have been acceptable for the massacre by one of the Maguindanaos, their political enemies, according to my Palace informant.

After receiving the information about the massacre, GMA talked with Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr., who denied involvement in the massacre.

The President, according to the Malacañang insider, told Ampatuan she was sending to investigators to Maguindanao.

She could have told Ampatuan that he would have to surrender because there were witnesses linking him and his relatives to the dastardly act.

But GMA didn't do that because the Ampatuans are her very close political allies in Maguindanao.

The Ampatuans have seen up their dozens against her, according to the Palace insider.

You see, the Ampatuans are political kingpins in that part of Mindanao.

They are considered demigods by many of their followers.

In the 2010 presidential election, GMA's rival Fernando Poe Jr., a movie actor known to his fans as "FPJ," got zero in many of the towns in Maguindanao.

There was no way cheating did not take place in the province in the 2004 elections as FPJ was idolized by the Muslims.

Only urban legend goes that when the elections, GMA played duel in a movie, the Muslims among the moviegoers went wild and would shoot up the screen. But in the evening away from the story).

As a reward for their loyalty

ON TARGET
RANNIE TEODORO

tion, GMA's rival Fernando Poe Jr., a movie actor known to his fans as "FPJ," got zero in many of the towns in Maguindanao.

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Only urban legend goes that when the elections, GMA played duel in a movie, the Muslims among the moviegoers went wild and would shoot up the screen. But in the evening away from the story).

As a reward for their loyalty

Malacañang allegedly allowed the Ampatuans to go around with 50 or so armed bodyguards (even outside their turf).

Several years ago, Gov. Andal Ampatuan confronted me at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2 for writing about his many bodyguards.

I had just alighted from a PAL plane from Puerto Princesa, while he came down from a plane from General Santos City.

As I was talking to him, I took note of his bodyguards, who were all in fatigue uniform and toting either M-16 rifles or M-60 machine guns. I lost count after 30.

Fortunately, Ampatuan didn't touch me, although I sensed he wanted to slap me, but I stopped him from doing so.

I told the President's henchmen, Elder Asenjo, who was there to greet those friend, about the incident.

I asked Mr. Arroyo why Ampatuan was allowed to go around with so many armed bodyguards even in Metro Manila, which is outside his turf.

You know what Mike Arroyo told me?

"Pabayaan mo na siya, Alan; dalisdis siya (Let him be, Alan; he's slippery)," he told me.

I told the President's spouse there might come a time when the Ampatuans' abuse of power could explode in the President's face.

The massacre in Maguindanao has made my words prophetic.

Easy way to track cab, jeep crimes

By Alison W. Lopez

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority (MMDA) has made it easier for jeepney and taxi passengers to report crimes committed inside public transport vehicles using their "Trip Tracker" program by introducing text-in reports.

Starting Monday, MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando said passengers may now send their complaints via text messages to the Trip Tracker hotline 0966, which is open to subscribers of all cellular phone networks.

Fernando said he expects the number of texters to increase since the new four-digit number would be easier to remember.

"The MMDA will post stickers bearing the new number inside taxis and other public utility vehicles such as buses and jeepneys, as well as common areas like malls and taxi stands," said Fernando, who resigned recently after he declared his plans to run for president.

The Trip Tracker project, launched under the agency's Safe City program, was designed to deter crimes committed inside public utility vehicles, particularly taxi cabs.

Once they board the vehicle, passengers need only to text its plate number and send it to 0966. They may also report cases of traffic violations and abusive drivers through this number.

The system is linked with the Philippine National Police and the Land Transportation Office.

Detained Magdalo soldier files CoC, eyes seat in Congress

By Nitz Cahiga

EE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CAMpaign in person but detained Navy Lt. (sg) Antonio Lagrog yesterday said he was confident of winning a seat in Congress because of his "growing mass base."

The 39-year-old member of the rebel group Magdalo for mallord his intention to run for congressman in the second district of Taguig City by filing his certificate of candidacy (CoC) at the Commission on Elections (Comelec) office in Intramuros.

Before filing his CoC, he attended a Mass held at the covered court of the 8P Village in Western Bicutan, Taguig City at around 10 a.m., accompanied by his family and at least 25 policemen serving as escorts.

"This coming election, let's use the ballots as our strong instruments in choosing the right leader who will serve the interests of the people," Lagrog told [illegible] the Mass.

Lagrog was among the group of junior officers which occupied the Oakwood Premier hotel in Makati City in 2003 to air their grievances against the government.

Detained at the custodial center of the Philippine National Police, he was also accused of rebellion for his alleged participation in the Manila Peninsula takeover in 2007.

The judge trying Lagrog's case allowed him to leave the detention cell yesterday to file his CoC.

Asked if he was trying to copy Trillanes who was also detained for some in 2007, he said, "No, Trillanes copied the Magdalos for all of us."

But he said the [illegible] of local politics were different compared to when senators were running for national office.

"In the national elections, you may literally rely on mass media, but for the local, you must conduct a house-to-house campaign," Lagrog said.

He added that since he was unable to campaign, he would let his supporters speak for him.

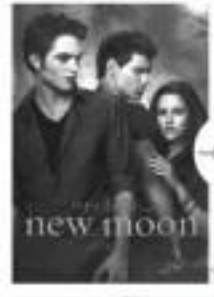
According to Lagrog, the Magdalo movement has around 4,000 members in Taguig City.

He added that he would like to lay advocacy for advocacy by 2013 which includes social equity and good governance. "I believe we will be found by 2013 [because] our cases were politically motivated," he said.

The Magdalo, however, has yet to decide who among the presidential candidates it will back after Sen. Francis Escudero, the group's choice, decided not to run for any public office next year.

Other Magdalo members who are expected to run in 2013 are Brig. Gen. Danny Lim, Col. Ariel Querubin and Capt. Irene Jones Langbit and Gary Alejano.

LT. (SG) James Layog, a member of the Magdalo, flashes certificate of candidacy as the Commission on Elections office as his wife and son look on. Layog is running for congressman in Taguig City. NELSON GARCIA



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★★★★★
"THE BEST AMERICAN DRAMA OF THE YEAR"
"ONE OF THE BEST FILMS OF 2009"

Ivler still in country; Hold order in force

By Tina G. Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INvestigation (NBI) yesterday said Jason Ivler, suspected gunman in the killing of a Malacañang official's son, was moving from one province to another to elude arrest.

"We received information that he is still in the country," said NBI Director Nonnatus Rojas although he did not elaborate, saying it might jeopardize search operations.

Angelito Magno, chief of NBI Special Action Unit, said parents of the 27-year-old fugitive, linked to the shooting of Renato Victor Eballe Jr., a son of Bataan Eballe Sr., on undetermined at the DC Inc. of the Presidential Chief of Staff, were already distributed for passing to foreign places all over the country.

"Ivler also has a bold department order issued by the Bureau of Immigration even before the Eballe incident on Nov. 10," said Magno.

Ivler had been implicated in a traffic accident in 2004 that claimed the life of Nestor Pobre Jr., a fabricating undercover agent.

Authorities yesterday failed to find Ivler in two Antipolo subdivisions where he was earlier sighted.

With Nancy C. Carvajal

Velasco files appeal

From page A1 >

over government television station NBN-4 on July 21, 2003.

In his appeal before the appellate court, Velasco said the Manila RTC erred when it admitted in evidence an unauthenticated transcript of his television interview in violation of the Electronic Evidence Law and the Rules on Evidence.

According to Velasco, "assuming for the sake of argument that the electronic evidence [was] admissible, the court erred in ruling that the words I uttered [were] those quoted in the information . . . Assuming that the tape [was] genuine, there was no showing that the words I uttered were libelous."

He added that the lower court made a mistake when it found malice on his part and failed to take into consideration the constitutional right guaranteed freedom of the press and of free speech.

Velasco also said the Manila RTC was wrong to award damages to Angeles because he "merely acted in good faith in exercising the freedom of the press and of free speech."

"It made a mistake when it ruled that there was libel against the honorable former Justice Secretary Artemio Tuquero when the latter is not the private complainant in this case nor was there any evidence given to prove damage against him," he added.

Velasco stressed that the Supreme Court, in its Aug. 20 decision, upheld with finality a ruling by the appellate court dismissing the administrative aspect of the case filed against him.

Angeles had also charged Velasco administratively, saying the latter must be removed from government service because of his alleged libelous statements.

The high tribunal, in dismissing the administrative case against him, had cited the constitutional guarantees of press freedom and of free speech, Velasco said.

"Unfortunately, the copy of the high court's decision was released [late]. But with it, the appellate court would not go against the high tribunal, neither would the Supreme Court reverse itself, specifically with regard to freedom of speech and expression," he added.

METROBRIEFS

3 hurt in 4-vehicle mishap

THREE people were hurt in a four-vehicle mishap on the South Luzon Expressway before Tuesday midnight. A truck carrying boxes of soft drinks skidded and hit a bus and a van, Albert Barrera of Skyway Traffic Management Unit said over the phone. The driver of the FB truck and his two companions were injured and taken to a hospital for treatment. **Nitz Cahiga**

Testimonial dinner set

THE PHILIPPINE Air Force Aviation Cadet and Officer Honors Association Inc. will host its traditional testimonial dinner and awards night at 6 p.m. on Nov. 23 at The ABC Tent at Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. Lt. Gen. Oscar M. Calimlim, Air Force chief, will be the guest of honor. Phone call 8844881 or 8844901 local 8777 for information.

DID YOU KNOW

THE FORMER names of some of Manila were Sagandohan, Maynilad de Bathala, La Villa, La Concha and Wallace-Held. **Cyrel C. Zinampan, Inquirer Research**

AIDS in China spreading fastest via heterosexual sex

SHANGHAI—THE VIRUS THAT causes AIDS is now spreading fastest in China through heterosexual sex, a trend demanding new strategies to stave off a rise, from the epidemic after years of progress in containing it, a United Nations (UN) report said.

Data show that 48 percent of new HIV infections diagnosed in China were acquired through heterosexual contact, with homosexual sex accounting for 32 percent and most of the remainder related to drug abuse, which was previously the main source of infections and the government's main focus for prevention.

The rate of infection through heterosexual sex in China tripled between 2005-2007, according to the report released on Tuesday in Shanghai by UNAIDS. Since 2007, the number of infections through homosexual sex has more than doubled.

"We are reconfirming. We are seeing a shift in the nature of the epidemic," said Michel Sidibe, executive director for UNAIDS. Similar trends in Asia and African highlight the need to focus on populations most at risk, such as migrants and sex workers, he said.

"We need to ensure resource allocation is responding to that change," Sidibe said.

The government remains underfunded for the disease, regularly cracking down on activists and patients who seek more support and rights.

In Beijing on Wednesday, a group of more than 40 AIDS patients from Henan province were detained shortly after protesting for compensation outside the Health Ministry building, according to their legal advisor, Aong Thanyong.

Most of the patients were infected with AIDS after through blood transfusions at hospitals in Henan, according to one of the protesters contacted Gao, who tested positive in 2007, after her husband died from AIDS.

"We've petitioned the local government, but they've ignored us, so we have nowhere left to go," said Gao, who has already traveled to Beijing twice this year to petition for additional compensation.

"Our local hospital in Luohang does not have the adequate experts and medication to treat patients like us. We need specialized care, which is why we have to turn to the central government for help."

Gao, whose husband unknowingly contracted HIV after selling his blood in 1995, traveled eight hours by train to Beijing to petition for compensation.

Officials from the ministry and police officers detained the group of more than 20 protesters, including four children with HIV/AIDS, according to Gao.

AP

Thiffs hardest photo taken and received on Nov. 21, from the Royal Children's Hospital shows grandiose Maisie Kelly (left) with Zeinida Noble (right), the woman who found the twins at a Dhaka orphanage in 2007, standing next to separated Bangladeshi twin Tristiana (between) at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. AP

Malaysian woman wants to be Hindu

KELOAM'S Rose Hoodless says his hands are raw and sore as a result of his operation alongside Linda Wauters (left), as commentator during an interview at the service center at Weywertze in Zaidez, Belgium on Tuesday. Hoodless was misdiagnosed for 23 years as being in a coma following a car crash in 1983 and his doctor in Liege famously discovered three years ago that Hoodless's brain was still functioning. AP

KUALA LUMPUR—A MALAYsian woman is fighting to be recognized as a Hindu after being converted to Islam when she was a child, in the latest case to challenge the strict Muslim majority Malaysian law lawyer said on Wednesday.

The case threatens to further anger non-Muslims who have complained that their religious rights are being sidelined, and could further erode minority support for the government.

Lawyer Gani Hoon Leong said Bavaganesan Subramaniam, 27, and her three siblings were under the care of a government orphanage in northern Penang state when she was converted to Islam by welfare officials in 1989 when she was 7 years old.

"The conversion is void because the trust (was) illegal. She wants to recover her Hindu birth and practice her religion freely," he told the Associated Press.

She can marry whom she was 18 and get married two years later, in 2011, to a traditional Hindu ceremony. When she returned to the home to collect her identity card and other documents, she was given the Muslim conversion certificate which listed her name as Siti Hasnah Mingit name Alfadillah, said Gani.

She has been unable to register her last name or name her husband as the father of their two children in their birth certificates as she is listed a Muslim. AP

Malaysia's Anwar wins libel suit

KUALA LUMPUR—MALAYSIAN opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim won a defamation suit on Wednesday against a government-linked newspaper over an article that he said portrayed him as a homosexual.

Anwar said The New Straits Times over a 2002 article titled "Anwar's link to US lobbyist" that examined his ties to a United States think tank.

Anwar claimed the article made him more like an "Anwar, who agreed" who was unpatriotic and sold defense to foreigners, while the newspaper argued it was only reporting the contents of a foreign magazine article about Anwar.

The High Court ruled in Anwar's favor and ordered the New Straits Times to pay him 150,000 ringgit ($43,860) in damages, said Anwar's lawyer, Sankara Nair.

An representative of the Times' legal team said they had not decided whether to appeal.

Anwar was Malaysia's deputy prime minister from 1993 until 1998, when he was ousted after falling out with then-leader Mahathir Mohamad. In 1999 he was sentenced to six years for corruption followed in 2000 by a nine-year sentence for sodomy. AP

Formerly conjoined twins recovering well

MELBOURNE—FORMERLY conjoined twin sisters Trishna and Krishna are savoring a favorite DVD and trying new foods as they continue their recovery from marathon separation surgery, doctors said.

Royal Children's Hospital chief of surgery Lee Dennan said on Tuesday that Trishna is now enjoying bread and fruit for the first time in her life, as she previously got her nutrition from her sister. The twins turn 3 next month.

Krishna is happily watching DVDs of "The Wiggles," Earwaker-Australian children's performers, as the twins for the first time lie in separate beds and can see each other.

"The exciting thing is they're now starting to play," Dennan told reporters, saying the girls have been looking at a book and interesting. "They're both still in hospital shape."

Trishna and Krishna had been joined at the top of their heads and shared brain tissue and blood vessels. They were separated last Tuesday and left intensive care on Monday. They are in stable conditions.

Dennan said he was amazed at the girls' improvement.

"It just shows you the amazing sort of changes that have happened with the girls to this very close time," he said.

An aid worker from one Trishna and Krishna is an orphanage in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, when they were a month old. The aid worker contacted the Children First Foundation, which brought the girls to Australia for the operation.

Their mother, Lovely Biddick, 25, handed over her girls to an orphanage because she and her husband were unable to care for their special needs.

She told The Associated Press this week that she hoped the girls would grow up in Australia.

"My babies are all alive and doing well. It's the best news I've ever got in my life," the tearful mother said after the operation.

The Children First Foundation has said it will support the twins as they undergo further medical treatment in Australia for at least the next two years. AP

Diagnosed as comatose for 23 years, Belgian feels reborn

BRUSSELS—HELPED BY A therapist, Rom Houben can stretch and flutter tapped with encouraging words as a computer translates his spelling and tone of his "silent, finely frustrated" in the 23 years he was trapped inside a paralyzed body.

After a doctor found he was wrongly diagnosed as being in a vegetative state, and worked out a way for him to communicate, Houben said he now feels calmer.

"And just like with a baby, it happens with a lot of trembling," the 46-year-old Belgian wrote, tapping out the words in French for Associated Press Television News on Tuesday in an only-gradual his hand.

A leading theoretician, however, expressed skepticism that Houben was really communicating, saying the responses were unrelated to the questions with such a profound injury and are unlikely to communicate for decades.

Injured in a car crash in 1983 when he was 23, Houben was diagnosed as being in a vegetative state, though doctors now believe he was conscious the whole time.

An expert using a specialized type of brain scan that was not available in the 1980s says he's usually confined Houben was suffering from a form of "locked in syndrome," in which people are unable to speak or move but can think and reason, and provided him with the equipment to communicate.

Now assisted by a speech therapist who moved his finger to letter along a touch-screen keyboard, Houben says years of being unable to move or express himself left him feeling "alone, lonely, frustrated, but also blessed with my family."

"It was especially frustrating when my family moved me," wrote Houben, who says he turned his father died during that time, but was unable to show any emotion. "I could not distract their worries. We couldn't not give each other support."

That inception. The brain, too, feel and think but no one can see that. You undergo things. You cannot participate in that," he wrote.

The therapist, Linda Wauters, told AFPN that she can feel Houben guiding her hand with gentle pressure from his fingers, and that she feels him objecting when the server his hand toward an incorrect letter.

Despite the occasional typo, the responses seemed fluid and conventional on Tuesday's gathering from a cold, he opened the interview by saying cut, with the help of his therapist. "You can't see it's cold moment. I have to take home."

Dr. Steven Laureys of Belgium's Coma Science Group, whose testing uncovered Houben's misdiagnosed, three years ago, said he has also seen degree of consciousness using state-of-the-art equipment like PET scans on other patients and looks at about 20 cases from around the world a year. AP

Khmer Rouge leader could get 40 years

PHNOM PENH—PROSECUtors in the genocide trial of a former Khmer Rouge prison chief demanded a 40-year sentence on Wednesday for a man who they described as mulling out innocent lives and spreading terror across Cambodia.

Kaing Guek Eav commanded the notorious S-21 prison, where those accused of disloyalty to the Communist regime were held. He oversaw the torture and execution of about 16,000 men, women and children during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 rule.

Some 1.7 million Cambodians died of torture, starvation, disease and executions during the Khmer Rouge's rule, during which the Maoist ideologues emptied cities and forced virtually the entire population to work on farm collectives.

Co-prosecutor William Smith told the court that Kaing Guek Eav died of torture on Duch (pronounced Doik), acknowledged his guilt and had given evidence against other Khmer Rouge leaders. But he said Duch must be held accountable for his "unrelenting brutality," AFP.

"The sentence to be imposed by this trial chamber should be 40 years imprisonment," Smith said, adding that five years had been taken off the request for his cooperation and five more for time already served.

"Your honors should be mindful of the chronic and opportunistic thirst were denied, also keep in mind the S-21's unrelenting brutality that was directed not only to prisoners but also to their families," he said.

Defense lawyers said the court should consider Duch's cooperation with the tribunal and his remorse.

Duch, who is the first of five defendants to face trial, is expected to be sentenced early next year.

He showed no emotion when the sentence recommendation was read.

If the tribunal finds him guilty, the former schoolteacher could still face a maximum penalty of life in prison. Cambodia has no death penalty.

Duch is charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes, murder and torture. He has already admitted killing or torturing the 5-21 prisoners, and has stated that he acted with reluctance via orders from his superiors, saying he feared for the safety of his family and himself.

Survivors of the S-21 have described how they were systematically beaten, executed electrocuted, had their toenails torn out, and were sometimes buried alive. AP

KAING Guek Eav, alias Duch

Kennel club prezies to judge AKC/UPI shows; FCI Master's Cup up for grabs

[illegible]

The WORLD

Lito Lorente B. Gosco

Obama vows to finish job in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, vowing to "finish the job" in Afghanistan, promised on Thursday he would soon announce his decision on sending tens of thousands more United States troops to battle al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Obama said he would make an announcement after Thursday's Thanksgiving holiday, spelling out the "obligations" of US allies and making clear that "the Afghan people ultimately are going to have to provide for their own security."

"After eight years, some of those years in which we did not have, I think, either the resources or the strategy to get the job done, it is my intention to finish the job," he said after talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

OBAMA AP

Aides declined to comment on reports Obama would use a prime-time speech next Tuesday to unveil plans to ramp up the 68,000 troops already in the region.

"We are going to dismantle and degrade their capabilities and ultimately dismantle and destroy their networks. And Afghanistan's stability is important to that process," Obama promised.

Obama faces a US public sharply divided on the war and calls from some Democrats allies to set a flexible timetable for withdrawal eight years after US-led forces invaded Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

"I feel very confident that when the American people hear a clear rationale for what we're doing there and how we intend to achieve our goals, that they will be supportive," he predicted.

Obama also said "the whole world" had a responsibility to help the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, and that his announcement would detail "the obligations of our international partners."

After months of deliberation, under fire from Republicans like the "dithering" on a decision, Obama held his cards and final strategy session with top commanders and national security aides for two hours late Monday. AFP

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US won't sign land mine ban

WASHINGTON—THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION has decided not to sign an international convention that bans land mines.

State Department spokesperson Ian Kelly said on Tuesday that the administration recently completed a review and decided not to change the Bush administration's policy.

"We decided that our land mine policy remains in effect," he said.

More than 150 countries have agreed to the Mine Ban Treaty's provisions to end the production, use, stockpiling and trade in mines. Besides the United States, holdouts include China, India, Pakistan, Burma (Myanmar) and Russia.

Human rights groups had expressed hope that the Obama administration would sign the treaty.

Stephen Goose, director of Human Rights Watch's arms division, said he was surprised by the announcement and called it disappointing. He said that his group had been pushing the administration to conduct a review of its policy, but the administration had given no indication that one was under way.

"If one was already completed, it was not very extensive," he said.

The State Department's Kelly said that the United States would send an observer group of mine experts to a review conference on the treaty in Cartagena, Colombia, next week.

A report this month by the International Campaign to Ban Land mines found that mines remain planted in more than 70 countries. It also said mines triggered by accidents killed at least 1,286 people and wounded 5,895 last year.

More than 3.2 million anti-personnel mines, 250,000 anti-vehicle mines and 17 million other explosives left over from wars have been removed since 1999, the report said. AP

China mining blast toll climbs to 107

BEIJING—THE NUMBER OF DEAD IN CHINA'S worst mining accident in five years rose to 107 on Wednesday after three more bodies were pulled out of the coal mines, state media said.

The state-run Xinhua News Agency cited local authorities as saying the bodies of two workers were retrieved on Wednesday morning, with a third pulled out in the afternoon. The report said the search continued for the last two people missing under ground at the state-run Shuang mine in Hegang city, Heilongjiang province.

China's mine safety authorities have blamed crowded conditions, insufficient ventilation and slow rescue efforts for the high death toll in the gas explosion, which hit before dawn Saturday when 520 miners were under ground.

The blast was a blow to the government's recent efforts to improve safety standards in the industry, the deadliest in the world.

The families of 16 of the miners killed have already signed one-time compensation agreements with the mine's owners, the Hegang branch of the Heilongjiang Longmei Mining Holding Group, worth 182,400 yuan ($33,000) each, according to a report in the Wuhan Evening News.

The Shuang mine's director, deputy director and chief engineer have been fired, an employee has said. He refused to give his name because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

China has closed or absorbed hundreds of smaller, private mines run state-owned operations, which are considered generally safer. But some of the most deadly accidents this year continue to be at state-run mines. AP

LARRY Rodriguez (left) of Coca-Cola stares into Jerry Cruz of Rubicon Steel in their game last night. ALEX MACIAS

Editor Teddyboy S. Melendres ● Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Dichoso

SPORTS

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WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Orcollo survives spate of world 10-ball upsets /A24

WORLD CHESS CUP

So shocks Ivanchuk

KHANTY-MANSIYSK, RUSSIA—FILIPINO Grandmaster Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. stopped Ukrainian Vassily Ivanchuk in the opener of their second round showdown in the World Chess Cup at the Khanty-Mansiysk Festival of Arts.

Utilizing the Smith-Morra Gambit, Antonio forced Ivanchuk to give up a rook and bishop for a knight and bishop.

On the 28th move, he forced an exchange of queens and went into the endgame with two rooks, a knight and five pawns against Ivanchuk's rook, knight, bishop and four pawns.

SO

By, who wins on Bls of 2640, has also been in Chinese super GM Bi Hua and drew with Akiwi Hatori of Japan in the 2006 Dresden Chess Olympiad. In last year's Asian Chess Team Championship in the UAE, he also drew with Sergey Karjakin (Blr 2722) of Russia.

Top seed GM Boris Gelfand of Israel settled for a draw with GM Pantelis Antonatos of Tajikistan in their opening match on same wage, and so did second seed GM Vugar Gashimov of Azerbaijan opposite GM Dmitry Jakovenko of China.

Third seed GM Peter Svidler of Russia, Bls 4 GM Alexander Morozevich of Russia and No 5 Teimur Radjabov of Azerbaijan also suffered setbacks at the hands of Evgeniy Miroshnichenko of Kazakhstan, Viktor Laznicka of Czech Republic and Konstantin Sakaev of Russia. Roy Aramo

Rain or Shine thwarts Coke

By Cedrill P. Tigas

SOLOMON MERCADO PRODUCED his best performance of the season to help Rain or Shine hold off Coca-Cola, 92-84, last night and secure its second victory in the PBA 35th Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Heeding coach Coby Torcaso's call to be more consistent on both ends, Mercado fired 24 points, including a jumper with 28 seconds left that wrapped up the victory for the Elasto Painters, who ducked out of the cellar by snapping an 0-3 ...

"This gives us confidence going into the second round," said Garcia. "I think my players are still capable of winning more games."

The Tigers, now the cellar dweller at 1-7, actually threatened to tip the game wide open in the second quarter which they ended with a 15-2 spurt.

But the Elasto Painters, who dealt league-leader Alaska their only loss last week, came alive in the third period, where they outscored the Tigers, 24-15.

"It [tough triple game the Elasto Painters] their biggest lead at 82-67 with 5:53 left. The Tigers missed their way back behind Alex Cabagnot, whom Rain San Beda Mercado the gap to 83-87.

They came Mercado's locker from the perimeter that pushed the lead to 89-81.

"I talked to him yesterday that if he wants to get more minutes, he has to play consistent and tonight he stepped up," Garcia said of Mercado, who also assisted on Gabe Norwood's dunk for an 87-80 buffer.

Mercado also pulled down four rebounds and a personal conference-best eight assists to go with his run ...

The score:

**ROR (P. Mercado 24, Norwood 13, Ilon 10, Lassiter 9, Demusis 8, Yeng 8, Asoro 7, Pinto 5, Nuyles 5, Dela Cruz 4, Mercado 4, Ilon 3, Ilon 2, Ilon 1, Ilon 0, Ilon 0, Ilon 0

Wizards nip 76ers after owner dies

WASHINGTON—ANTHONY JACKSON AND 32 points and 14 rebounds to lead Washington past the Philadelphia 76ers 108-107 on Tuesday, hours after the death of Wizards owner Abe Pollin.

Mob Young added 20 points for the Wizards, despite playing without Cuttor Hoiles, who sat out with a sore right ankle.

Louis Williams' layup pulled Philadelphia to 108-107 with 40 seconds remaining. After Gilbert Arenas committed a turnover with 28 seconds left, Williams missed a potential game-winning 3-pointer as the final buzzer sounded.

Pollin's death was announced by his company, Washington Sports & Entertainment. He was 81.

At Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 36 points, and Rick Fox added 11 points and 16 rebounds as Los Angeles exploited a center size advantage in beating New York, 100-90, for its fourth straight victory.

Bryant, Fox in accord 17 points for the Lakers, who took control of their eighth win in 10 meetings by scoring 17 consecutive points to the third quarter while holding the Knicks scoreless for nearly 7½ minutes.

Andrew Bynum added 12 points and eight rebounds on an injured right ankle, although he barely needed to jump while helping Los Angeles to a 60-36 rebounding advantage over Steve Nash's undersized front line.

Trailers mulls Seattle 22, Indiana 17; Washington 40, Philadelphia 30; Golden State 19, Dallas 10; Denver 37, New Jersey 31; Oklahoma City 30, Utah 29; Lakers 60, 90 Knicks 36

Reuters

DENNIS ORCOLLO. Right on target

Orcollo survives spate of world 10-ball upsets

By Cedell T. Tupas

A DASH OF BEVERAGE ROCKED THE start of the World Ten-Ball Championship with Overseas world No. 1 Ralf Eggert, American 28th seed Shaun Van Boening and Filipinos stars Jeff De Luna, Bonnie Alcaide and Dennet Boone Pulpul posted to the brink of elimination yesterday at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

Dennis Orcollo survived the string of upsets, overcoming compatriot Steve Villasil, 9-6, in Group A to move within a victory of reaching the round of 16.

Outmuscled Filipino Jonas Ocampo also took a significant step in his qualifying bid from Group E with a stunning 9-8 victory over Wang Hung-hsiang of Chinese-Taipei.

Orcollo will play Roland's Thomas Kaplan for a place in the seat round. Kaplan came from behind to upset Eggert, 9-8.

The 23-year-old Ocampo, a qualifier from Alaminos, Pangasinan, whose only major title is the local circuit came last year when he topped the search for Billiards Idol 3, fought back from 6-8 down to beat the second seeded Taiwanese in Group G.

De Luna, satisfied servants in the tournament after an impressive showing in the Asian circuit this year, bowed to Turkey's Mehmet Caskurl, 7-9, before Alcaide, who is shooting for a third world title, yielded to Chinese qualifier Tang Jia-lin, 7-9, in Group H.

Pulpul, a surprise semifinalist in last year's tournament, also lost to former world champion Johnny Archer of the United States, 7-9.

The names set up a bloodbout match between Pulpul and Illusion.

Soggart time to keep for bid also against Kirland, who also made the 128-race main draw via a qualifying tournament.

Seeded fifth, Van Boening took an 8-5 loss from Hypers Sub Team of Taiwanese.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Knights dethrone Archers

By Jasmine W. Payo

AT HALLMOON SEATED FROM THREE-point range as the Letran Knights ousted defending champion La Salle Green Archers, 65-73, in the "Sweet 16" of the Philippine Collegiate Champions League yesterday at the Ynares Sports Arena in Pasig City.

LAST SATURDAY
(MOA Kiddy Fiesta)
7 p.m.—SD vs.EC
Ivy In—JV vs Mapua

Reinforcement knocked in 30 of his career-high 36 points from beyond the arc, including back-to-back triples that quashed a late Archers rally and pushed the Knights ahead by 14 points, 60-46.

The Arrows Blue Knights, the top seed following their back-to-back UAAP title romp this season, also advanced after downing the Ignorots Heroes, 73-63, in the second game.

Alex Salva hurled 17 points for the Eagles, who snagged ahead, 63-56, in the third period.

Delarosa, a 6-foot-1 sweetgrower who averaged only 3.8 points in the NCAA, registered a sizzling 52.6 percent from beyond the arc.

His 18 three-pointers turned out to be the most number of triples shot in one game this year both in the UAAP and NCAA.

"That shooters heard that story," said Letran coach Louie Alas. **"With that kind of shooting, any coach would have won that game."**

Letran will take on the winner between NCAA titlist San Sebastian and Cebu's University of San Carlos in the quarterfinals of the knockout event that gets the best collegiate teams in the country.

Aurrero will clash with the victor in the UST-Jose Rizal University battle.

The Jay Eustaquio-Ty Tenorio-and Sen Bello-led Lions also remained their first-round assignment last Monday.

Federer ends year at No.1

LONDON—THERE are plenty of special effects inside the O2 arena for the ATP Tour Finals but nothing could match the sight of Roger Federer in full flow as he beat Andy Murray on Sunday to guarantee the year-end No.1 ranking.

FEDERER AP

Federer did not have to be at his magical best but after a wobbly start he took control midway through the match and trounced the 17,500 capacity crowd to score what for only he can play, sending off the last tennis games for a 1-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory.

He secured them set wins in Group A owners that would No. 2 Rafael Nadal can no longer close the points gap to the ranking and Federer will have the honor of finishing the year as the world's No. 1 for the fifth time in his career.

Standing in his way on Sunday was his rival Murray on Tuesday, who had his chance to beat Wimbledon 6-4, 7-6, 7-6 in the day session to make up for his defeat by Murray on Sunday, the fifth of six singles matches played so far that have gone the distance. Reuters

Tigers clobber Wang's cagers

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS CAUGHT reigning National Basketball champion Wang's Basketball in its worst form, posting a 103-83 win in the 2009 MBL Invitational basketball championship at the Ynares gym in Antipolo, Rizal.

Aric Ting scored a game-high 23 points to lead the Tigers to their 1-0 win. Jayvee Lacerna and Gerwin Dumas in their second outing in the season-ender tournament sponsored by Smart Communications, Globe Underwear, PBC Management Services, Big Boy Restaurant, Gatorade Beach Resort Cebu and Jose's Band.

Ting, son of former PBA standout Alvin Ting, highlighted his scoring spree with four triples as he teamed with Chris Ramirez and Alpha Maninao in dealing Wang's its worst defeat in recent years.

Ramirez tallied 16 points, while Maninao added 15 points for the Tigers, whose 40-point edge sets also a record high in the league.

Cebu Niños rout Laguna Stallions

By Jana Pancaro

CEBU 127-99—91, LAGUNA 109: Ernesto Padida Cebu completed Laguna, 97-72, last night to solidify its championship bid in the 2009 Asean Aqua Philippines Conference 3 import leg at the Cebu Coliseum here.

Pleading behind an unforgiving fullcourt press, the four Niños strung up 17 points bridging the third and fourth periods on the way to nailing an 18th consecutive win and their second straight in the championship stage.

Marlon Magsanoc, Jeffrey Cariaso and Mark Alabar combined to give the Niños a 79-53 backlink early in the fourth period after the Stallions gave within 53-62.

Khid Baligasa, a 5-foot-7 point guard with awesome ball-handling skills, went in action in the last four minutes as the Niños assumed control victory.

The scores:

CEBU (R)—Baez 23, Jalalon 14, Padilla 13, Sala 11, Mayco 10, Jumpit 8, Magsanoc 8, Cariaso 7, Alabar 6, Padilla 5, Lim 4, Jumawid 3, Salinas 0, Sadsad 0.

LAGUNA—D. Ilagan 29, Tolosa 12, Laurano 12, Sara 11, Obregon 8, Villano 7, Angeles 7, Dalisay 2, Khid 1, Abalos 0, Pasion 0, Legaspi 0, Arnaldo 0, Sanchez 0.

Quarters: 29-22, 51-38, 71-53, 91-77

A World Pool repeat of Superman vs King Rat?

BARE EYE

Recap
Trinidad

KIDEN RIVERA AND DANNIEL BUSTAMANTE are one, but another unforgettable thriller in the making could be a repeat match-a-mano between Superman and King Rat in the World Pool Ball championships.

The Gun slayer the English-dreamed Superman is already in their bar on, cruising in the World 9-Ball Championship at the Ateneo Coliseum in 2000.

Rivera and Dionisio, who fell one of the other in the 2007 championship, are not seeing action this year, but a greater development is the obvious clearing of the cold war between two mighty heroes in Philippine billiards.

* * *

This pleasant twist surfaced earlier with the announcement that former world No. 1 Dennis Orcollo will be included in the roster of the world championship that started yesterday at the World Trade Center in Pasay's Trinidad Plaza.

Also listed in that original list were Lee Van Corona and Marlon Manalo.

Of course, there was bigger applause from avid pool fans yesterday when Cedell Tupas reported that Bustamante, Rivera's former all over the world as Master Shaun, a two-time world champion, has joined the RP entourage.

* * *

Jim Mahidlawon, head of the organizing Bays Sports, confirmed that they have talked started to meet Bustamante, who averaged 2007 success in the championship against Englishman Daryl Peach as the billionaire Antonio Gonzalez in 2007?

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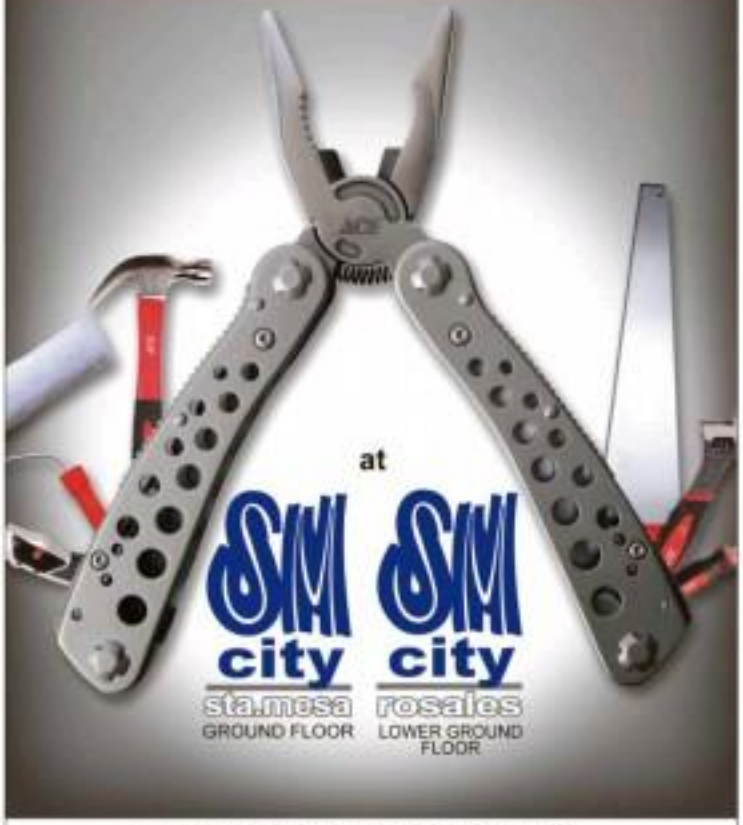

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■ Tanduay to sell PSB worth of 5-year retail bonds /B2
■ IMF now expects RP to grow by 1.5% in 2009 /B6

Lito Ruel O. Marcelo • Associate Editor Carrie S. Mariano
BUSINESS

RP imports dropped by hefty 25% in Sept.

Trade gap reported to have narrowed further

By Rooney W. Domingo

ALTHOUGH PHILIPPINE IMPORTS POSTED A SLIGHT recovery month-on-month, it still registered a contraction on a yearly basis—this time by a hefty 25 percent in September from the same month last year.

Also, the country clocked up a trade deficit of $34 million in September, bringing the shortfall in the first nine months of the year to $4.04 billion. It is the smallest monthly trade deficit since a surplus in November 2008.

In September, merchandise imports grew by 1.5 percent to $3.67 billion from $3.617 billion in August due to a rise in inbound shipments of electronic products, National Statistics Office data showed.

Still, imports continued to dip for the 13th straight month since October last year.

It slowed further in September by 25 percent from the $4.895 billion posted in the same month last year.

This brought the import bill in the nine months to September to $35.477 billion, or 30.2 percent less than the $45.361 billion worth of goods shipped in the same period last year.

Based on the NSO's latest report on national trade, two-way trade (of goods for the nine-month period dropped by 29.6 percent to $58.316 billion from $84.203 billion a year ago.

In September alone, total trade fell by 21.6 percent to $7.806 billion from $9.337 billion in the same period last year.

From January to September, the trade balance settled at a deficit of

BUSINESS/B2

RESORT President Macapagal-Arroyo listens to Andrew Tan of Alliance Global Group Inc. (left) and Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano as they show her a scale model of Resort World Manila, which will rise in Pasay City.

Financial Markets
CURRENCIES
PESO-DOLLAR RATE
₱46.710 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Nov. 25, 2009
¥98.21 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Nov. 25, 2009
NOVEMBER
STOCK MARKET
Shares close lower
SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY
PSE COMPOSITE INDEX
See stock market report on Page B2

Philippine '09 farm output looks grim

By Riza T. Chikiamco

THE PHILIPPINES HAS FURTHER lowered expectations on farm production, with zero-to-1% growth seen, as the crop sector reels from the effects of devastating storms.

Growth in the country's agricultural output will likely be at the lower end of the 0.5 percent to 1.5 percent target range of the government.

"There will be an adjustment, definitely. We are looking at the lower end of the target," Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap yesterday told reporters.

Crops such as rice and corn make up about 50 percent of the country's total agricultural production.

The Department of Agriculture estimates that the agriculture sector suffered P47 billion in damage from recent calamities, including Tropical Storm "Ondoy" and Typhoon "Pepeng."

With crop production permanently in storms, the farm sector will have to depend on fisheries and high-value commercial crops such as vegetables for growth.

All targets have in fact been adjusted as storms had forced farmers to replant, Yap said.

Harvests from replanted areas will likely come in only 2010, boosting first-quarter production.

"That's why I'm predicting that first quarter output will grow," Yap said.

He would not, however, give a figure for the first quarter.

Last month, the IMF had downgraded its growth forecast for the year to about 1.5 percent instead next year. It slashed the estimate to 0.5 to 1.5 percent in the aftermath of the storms.

Benjamin Diokno, former budget secretary and a professor at the UP School of Economics, said in a text message that a 0.5-percent growth would be most likely for 2009.

"For the fourth quarter it's going to be flat at best, with high probability that it could be negative, Diokno said.

The Bureau of Agricultural Statistics reported last week that the Philippines, the world's top rice importer, could sustain a double-digit drop in the production of its main staple, rice, in the fourth quarter. Reserve

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Tanduay to sell P5B worth of 5-year retail bonds

Company to use funds for debt refinancing

By Doris C. Dumlao

RAW LIQUOR MAKER TANDUAY Distillers Inc., a subsidiary of Lucio Tan's Tan Ban Ban Holdings Inc., plans to raise as much as P5 billion from the sale of five-year retail bonds.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Tanduay said proceeds from the issuance would be used for general corporate purposes, including the refinancing of debt.

First Metro Investment Corp., PNB Capital and Investment Corp. and Allied Banking Corp. were named joint lead managers for the issue.

The bonds will be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) but the timetable for the offering has yet to be set.

Bankers said there was ample liquidity in the domestic financial system to support the bond offerings of listed companies.

Local credit watcher Credit Rating and Investors Services Philippines Inc. (CRISP) assigned its highest rating of "AAA" to the proposed bond issuance.

The rating indicates "strongest capacity to meet the obligation and very low probability of default by a debt issuer."

In assigning this credit rating, CRISP considered the strong Tanduay brand equity as well as the group's solid operations and strong financial performance as indicated by historically strong gross profit margin averaging 21.4 percent and average net income margin of 10.8 percent over the last five years.

It also cited tests of the operating efficiencies characterized by excellent integration of distillation process and environment-friendly technology that result in cost savings.

Tanduay, which celebrates its 155th anniversary this year, is the second largest producer of rum in the world and has a total of 140 international awards to its credit.

The company operates four bottling plants and two alcohol distilleries in strategic locations in the Philippines.

Its plants are equipped with state-of-the-art bottling technology and wastewater treatment facilities that have been favorably cited by government regulators.

Its two distilleries employ systems that capture methane, one of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming, and converts them into biogas energy to supplement the power needs of the distillation process.

The methane recovery system in Batangas was registered in a "clean development mechanism" project with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

PNOC-EC, Billiton ink agreement

PNOC EXPLORATION CORP. (PNOC-EC) yesterday said it had signed a participation agreement with Australia's giant BHP Billiton Petroleum for the joint exploration of the West Balabac area in offshore southwest Palawan under Service Contract (SC) 59.

"PNOC-EC retains a 25-percent interest in the block while BHP Billiton Petroleum holds the remaining 75 percent," the company said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

PNOC-EC, the upstream arm of state-owned oil firm Philippine National Oil Co., said BHP Billiton would become the operator of SC59, once all necessary approvals were obtained from the Department of Energy.

Additional data gathering, with a 2D seismic survey, is expected to begin by next month. Exploration activities had been conducted by PNOC-EC with the acquisition/reprocessing of more than 2,000 kilometers of seismic lines.

The exploration and production history of PNOC-EC covers an area of about 14,750 sq. kilometers (5,695 sq. miles) and a total of six water depths of up to 3,000 meters (9,850 feet).

PNOC-EC chair Jesus Francisco said BHP Billiton was expected to initially invest $3.65 million to drill two wells in the area.

Peers said BHP Billiton was the only party interested in SC59.

An American company earlier bowed out in the race but had backed out of the service contract due to the economic downturn, he added.

A bidding was held in May last year to PNOC-EC looked for partners for the development of SC59. However, the bidding was declared a failure, according to Perez.

SC59 covers an area spanning about 1.3 million hectares in Southwest Palawan, near Balabac. The contract was awarded to PNOC-EC on Jan. 25, 2006. That year, the company entered into a pact with Australian firm Top Oil Ltd. and Swedish company Lundin Oil Ltd., but negotiations did not progress. — Amy R. Remo

₱3.5B in 5-year Agri-Agra bonds sold via auction

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORP. SOLD P3.5 billion worth of 5-year bonds at a coupon of 5.125 percent at an auction on Wednesday, the Bureau of the Treasury said.

Total offers from banks totaled P7.35 billion, the Treasury said.

The state-run firm will use proceeds from the issue to rehabilitate irrigation facilities destroyed by strong typhoons that hit the country in September and October.

The average term had for the five-year government bonds was at 5.3423 percent in the secondary market on Wednesday afternoon against the previous day's 6.3519 percent.

In a statement earlier, NDC said the amount raised would be used to restore about 30,000 hectares of rice land all over the country as well as husband the repair and rehabilitation of irrigation systems covering another 20,000 hectares and the restoration of facilities covering 21,000 hectares of land.

These projects will be spearheaded by the National Irrigation Administration. With a report from Reuters

Bangko Sentral urged to relax SBL rule

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANKS ARE ASKING REGULATORS to allow some leeway in the rules that extend lending to single borrowers, to encourage greater participation in the bond market by firms of some big businesses with appetite for expansion.

Consuelo Garcia, country manager at BNP Philippines and chair of the Bankers Association of the Philippines' capital markets committee, said banks were in talks with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to ease the single borrowers' limit (SBL) which restricts each bank's exposure to a single borrower to only 25 percent of its capital.

She said the BAP has asked the BSP to exclude from the SBL computation, subject to certain rules, the bonds that banks would acquire as part of their underwriting activities in the capital market.

At present, she said banks were allowed a leeway equivalent to only about 5 percent of their capital for such transactions. She said the industry was hoping to expand, as even double, this.

She said regulators were also looking at some unclear fund flows to companies with foreign ownership, like Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc. (DigiTel) Group, and the Metro Pacific Investments Corp., Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. groups—as banks are curious and they might give out an opportunities to lend more to these top-tier but severe grows after entering SBL.

The proposed relaxation of the SBL, however, does not sit too well with the International Monetary Fund, as regulators across the globe have been tightening their lending rules following the global financial meltdown.

13 firms vie for geothermal deals

By Amy R. Remo

THIRTEEN COMPANIES SUBmitted on Monday 24 proposals to explore and develop prospective geothermal areas in the country, under the fourth Philippine Energy Contracting Round 2009. Three companies, according to Department of Energy documents, were Energy Development Corp. (EDC), state-owned PNOC-Renewables Corp. (PNOC-RC), Chevron Geothermal Salak Inc., Energy Resources Corp., Pan Pacific Power Corp., Bayon Holdings, Primary Energy Corp., AEI Construction Group Inc., Magma Energy Corp., Colombian Energy Corp., Aragon Resources, Rica Valley, Petroenergy Resources Corp. and Filtech Energy Holding Corp. (Redox).

The 18 geothermal areas that were offered for bidding were estimated to generate as much as 556 megawatts of power.

These projects will require as much as $900 million in investments, based on the general rule that an investment of $2.5 a month of per megawatt of geothermal power is developed.

The potential sites are Mt. Cagua-Rizal, Cagayan (Area 1), which has a potential capacity of 60 MW; Bolinao, Benguet (Area 2), 25 to 60 MW; Aragon, Bengcet (Area 3), 20 MW; Biliran, Biliran (Area 4), 40 MW; Bitantinga, Misamis Occidental (Area 5), 40 MW.

Also offered were prospective areas in Mt. Labo, Camarines Norte (Area 6), 40 MW; Banoy, Camarines Sur (Area 7), 75 MW; Sto. Lourdes-Taghaoy, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan (Area 9), 2 MW; Malasi, Sarigao del Norte (Area 9), 30 MW; and Mindoro-Leyte/Batangas (Area 10), 20 MW.

The combined potential for areas 2, 4, 6 and 9: PNOC-RC, Areas 6 and 7; Glow Rock, Areas 2 and 4; Pan Pacific, Areas 2 and 4; Bayon, Areas 2 and 4; Primary Energy, Area 3 and 8; AEI Construction, Area 5, 6, 7 and 10; Magma Energy over Areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; Colombian Energy Inc. 5; Aragon Resources, Area 6; Rica Valley, Area 9; Petroenergy, Area 10; and Redox, together with Rica Valley, Area 10.

The auction for these geothermal areas was formally closed on Monday.

The government will evaluate the proposals from June 23 up to Jan. 6, 2012 and award the contracts by Feb. 12, 2012.

The DOE holds the PSGR, a public bidding round, to encourage local and foreign companies to invest in the country's energy sector.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE
As of November 23, 2011

CURRENCIES

Inflation seen accelerating to 2.4-3.3% in Nov.

Shell bags ₱486-M Napocor contract

By Amy R. Remo

NATIONAL POWER CORP. has awarded P486 million worth of contract to Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., for the supply and delivery of oil based fuel.

The fuel would be used by Napocor for its mini oil based power plants, independent power producer contracts and its Small Power Utilities Group's (SPUG) power facilities for November and December 2009.

Napocor awarded the contract on Nov. 11.

The government, however, did not disclose the volume of fuel that Shell would be supplying.

Bidding documents prior to the awarding showed that the volume of fuel contained in the contract fell short of Napocor's planned purchases.

The state-run firm bid out 6 Gasoline P19.6 million worth of contracts, of it intended to buy 61,9,710 kiloliters of fuel oil and diesel for its main grid operations and another 39,267 liters for its off grid operations. These were supposed to meet the additional fuel requirements for this year.

Napocor awarded in June fuel supply contracts worth P3.39 billion. These were awarded to Petron Corp., P992 million; Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., P445 million; Chevron Philippines Inc., P868 million, and Filoil Resources Inc., P291 million.

By Rachel W. Chatlaine

THE RISE IN CONSUMER prices in November will likely come within the 2.4 to 3.3 percent range, accelerating from 1.6 percent in October, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said yesterday.

Tetangco said this could be attributed to supply side pressures brought about by the recent storms and heavy rains. It is also driven by increases in utility rates and fuel prices, he added.

Despite the uptick, he said the projected range for November would still be consistent with 2009 and 2010 inflation targets.

Monitoring by the Department of Energy shows that average Dubai crude prices from Nov. 1-26 increased by some $5 per barrel over the same period in October.

Also, the country's biggest power utility, Manila Electric Co., has announced that its consumers will have to pay an average of 23 centavos more per kilowatt hour.

As for water prices, a 12.1-percent increase in water prices contributed to the rise in inflation last month, suggesting a similar movement in November.

Monday's officials said the increase was due to earlier purchases of supplies from power generation firms.

The BSP is targeting an inflation range of 3.5-4.5 percent for 2009.

For 2010, the central bank seems to keep the rise in consumer prices within the range of 3.5 percent and 5.5 percent.

According to the National Statistics Office, inflation ticked up in October as the devastation of storms ondoy and pepeng pushed up the prices of rice, fruits and vegetables, and more to come as prices in the second to third quarter of 2009 is expected from dynamo.

IPVG posts ₱205-M loss

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY firm IPVG Corp. posted losses in the first nine months of this year as it decided to reinvest earnings to grow its businesses.

IPVG, which is engaged in business process outsourcing and Internet gaming, also suffered from the absence of a onetime gain which allowed it to post a profit last year.

The firm registered a net loss of P205.7 million as of end-September, coming from a P14.8-million profit in the same nine-month period last year.

IPVG's consolidated 9-month gross revenue hit P1.08 billion, down by 36 percent from the P1.13 billion a year ago.

Consolidated operating expenses for the first nine months dropped by P900,000 from the previous year's P920.8 million due to cost containment measures and operational efficiencies.

Earnings before interest, depreciation, and amortization declined by 69 percent to P21.3 million as of September 2009 from 35.25 million a year ago.

Paolo Montecillo

Subic investments hit $159.8M in Nov.

By Abigail L. Ho

COMMITTED INVESTMENTS AT THE Subic Bay Freeport reached $159.75-million as of mid-November, $135.25 million short of what was registered for the entire 2008.

According to data from the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, $21.72 million in new investments were pledged in the first quarter, $60.46 million in the second, $41.12 million in the third, and $36.45 million in the fourth as of mid-November.

Investments last year reached $695 million, a huge plunge from $880M recorded during 2007 performance.

Investments approved in Subic reached an all-time high of $1.71 billion in 2007, up from $1.44 billion in the previous year.

Total investments committed since the creation of the Subic Bay Freeport in 1992 however far surpassed to more than $1.91billion.

Despite the still relatively weak numbers for 2009, SBMA administrator Armand Arreza said the Freeport's performance will benefit global trends, considering that many of the country's traditional partner-economies were still reeling from the recession.

"We have stayed in the black all along despite the recession," he said in a statement, adding that as of Nov. 15, the number of approved investments in Subic for the year was placed at 1,301.

The confidence survey of investors despite the downturn, he said, had resulted in an 86,229-strong active workforce in the Freeport as of the third quarter, nearly 5.4 percent more than the 82,438 registered in the same period last year.

He said most Subic firms affected by the economic crisis had severely started to recover, and "have been, in fact, undertaking expansion projects."

Moving forward, he said SBMA would be focusing on expanding the Freeport's physical boundaries to enable it to generate more investments.

Arreza said he also proposed the creation of a P2-billion fund to allow both Subic and the neighboring Clark Freeport to expand and develop new economic zones in nearby areas.

Eight projects get BOI nod

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS HAS APproved the registration of eight projects worth about P1.7 billion, with a potential to generate 998 new jobs.

The biggest among these is that of Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc.—a P870.45-million petroleum product depot with marketing and distribution facilities in Liloan, Batangas.

Scheduled to start commercial operations by next month, the facility is expected to provide jobs to 28 individuals.

Another project that has secured the BOI nod is that of Industrial Land Inc. for its Megaminx Garden Terraces Toledo Townsite development in Mandaue City.

The P679-million project involves the construction of a condominium building with 196 low-cost units. It will start commercial operations by July 2010, generating 264 jobs upon completion.

A similar project, that of Filbi Avenue Property Development Corp., has likewise been granted BOI perks.

The Bandecela Eduardo Condominium in Lubog City, Cebu, involves an investment of P389 million for the construction of a 12-storey building with 258 housing units. The development will generate 499 new jobs by January 2010.

The BOI has also approved the application of Commanditaria Izabela Inc. for the Camella Izabela low-cost housing project in Antipolo City, Rizal.

With a price tag of P232.4 million, the project involves the construction of 2,01 housing units with sizes of 46 to 96 square meters. The project will provide employment to 52 people starting next month.

Philippine Hydro Inc. has likewise obtained BOI perks for its P130-million water filtration and treatment plant in Barangay Subukan.

Scheduled to start commercial operations in January 2010, the project will allow the company to supply clean, potable water to four barangays in Montegrande.

Other projects approved were Household Development Corp.'s P97 million Crestwood Subdivision in Antipolo City, Rizal; Harbor Square Development Corp.'s 979.3 million San Antonio Income in Lipa City, Batangas; and Philippines Auto Components Inc.'s P95.5 million auto parts and components manufacturing facility in Calamba, Laguna.

Abigail L. Ho

RP imports dropped by hefty 25% in Sept.

From page B1

$1.306 billion, improving from the $1.455-billion deficit registered in the first nine months of 2008.

The balance for September showed a deficit of $24 million, easing from $165 million seen in the same month of 2008.

"September trade deficit fell narrowed sharply to $24 million from a deficit of $165 million in August. This reinforces the narrowing in trade deficit seen in August and is driven primarily by imports valuation on the month being outstripped by the sequential growth in exports," said Vishnu Varathan, an economist at Singapore's Forecast PTE Ltd.

A rise in imports is considered positive because this indicates a similar movement in exports, especially for the Philippines, which relies heavily on foreign supplies of electronic inputs for its biggest source of export revenues.

But according to Varathan, the gap between exports and imports may expand anew.

"It is notable that the trade dynamics and commodity price trends suggest that the risk of a snap back in trade deficit looms large," Varathan said. "Trade deficit narrowing, that has been driven by the rise in imports-to-exports trend, will have to correct back sooner or later, probably sooner."

NSO data showed that electronic products are essential for 58.3 percent of total imports in September, falling by 22.1 percent to $1.116 billion year-on-year from $1.708 billion.

Electronic imports in September increased by 4.3 percent month-on-month from $1.282 billion, mainly due to increased shipments of semiconductor devices and parts.

Japan was the biggest source of imports in September, accounting for 34.6 percent of total cargoes or $534.15 million—a decrease of 5.8 percent year-on-year. With a report from Reuters

NOTICE OF TENDER OFFER TO SHAREHOLDERS OF MAKILING VINYL CORPORATION

Please be informed that on November 20, 2009, Tirazh Corporation (the "Bidder") filed a Tender Offer Statement (SEC Form 19-1) with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) pursuant to Section 19 of the Securities Regulation Code. The Bidder, which is a Cayman company incorporated and established under Japanese laws, offers to acquire 227,375,131 common shares or 22.75% of the total outstanding shares of Makiling Vinyl Corporation ("MVC") owned by shareholders (the "Shareholders") other than Tirazh Corporation and Ramon de Ocs Orbaneja, Inc., at a price of ONE PESO (₱1.00) per share.

Shareholders may tender all or a portion of their MVC common shares ("MVC Shares") for acceptance and purchase by the Bidder, subject to the Terms of the Tender Offer, beginning at 9:00 a.m. of November 24, 2009 until 12:00 noon of December 23, 2009 (the "Tender Offer Period"). The Tender Offer Period will not be extended.

The Tender Offer shall proceed whether or not the transaction described in the said SEC Form 19-1 on which bases the Tender Offer is made proceeds.

Only MVC Shares validly tendered by shareholders of record of MVC shall be accepted for payment by the Bidder. Only MVC shares tendered in acceptable form shall be accepted. Only shareholders who wish to tender their MVC Shares should go to their brokers (the "Participating Brokers") to have their MVC Shares lodged with the Philippine Depository and Trust Corporation and be tendered to their Participating Brokers. Please note that payment takes at least five (5) trading days. The applicable lodgement fees shall be for the account of tendering shareholders.

All tendered MVC Shares must be free from any claims, liens, encumbrances or restrictions, whether or not valid. The consideration for tendered shares shall be paid to the tendering shareholders' Participating Brokers within ten (10) business days after the termination of the Tender Offer Period. Within the same ten-day period, Participating Brokers will be informed of the acceptance or rejection of tenders made by said Participating Brokers. Tendering shareholders with accepted tenders must make arrangements with their Participating Brokers regarding the payment for their MVC Shares.

Tendering shareholders shall have the right to withdraw during the Tender Offer Period, any MVC Shares tendered, unless such MVC shares have been previously accepted for payment by the Bidder. For a withdrawal to be effective, a written notice of withdrawal must be timely received by the Participating Brokers who received such tender of shares. Withdrawals may be made only by the Participating Brokers who received such notice of withdrawal must notify the Bidder through the Depository. DPT Securities Corporation of such withdrawals in writing, indicating the number shares subject of the withdrawal, prior to the end of the Tender Offer Period. All expenses incurred by the Depository and/or the Participating Brokers in respect of the withdrawal of any MVC Shares shall be for the account of the shareholder making the withdrawal.

Tendering shareholders whose tenders were rejected, or who withdrew their tenders in accordance with the Terms of the Tender Offer, must make arrangements with their Participating Brokers regarding the withdrawal of their securities. The Depository will return all securities covered by rejected and/or withdrawn tenders within ten (10) business days from the end of the Tender Offer Period.

PSTC has SCCP fee, PSE fee, selling brokers' commission with value added taxes, stock transaction tax, lodgment fees, cost of issuance of new stock certificates and/or settlement fees (if any), on the sell side of the transaction, shall be for the account of the tendering stockholders.

The Bidder's bank in the Philippines has confirmed receipt and deposit from the Bidder of funds intended for this Tender Offer. These funds are sufficient to satisfy full acceptance of all tenders under the Tender Offer.

Copies of the Terms of the Tender Offer as well as SEC Form 19-1 may be obtained by MVC shareholders from the offices of any of the following: a) Participating Brokers; (a) the Depository (DPT Securities Corporation); (b) MVC. The Bidder has also requested the Philippine Stock Exchange to post the appropriate forms on its website at http://www.pse.com.ph. You may contact your broker/agent and/or financial adviser, or direct inquiries or requests for clarification on the Tender Offer process to:

The Depository
DPT Securities Corporation
Attention: Ms. Amanda G. Garcia at (632) 845-5705 and / or
Mr. Lester Ong at (632) 845-1041 and Ms. Lanuza Dizon at (632) 845-5389

Gold hits record as dollar slips

TOKYO—GOLD STRUCK A RECORD HIGH for a second time this week, rising above $1,170 an ounce after the dollar slipped and a newspaper reported that India was "open to buying" more gold from the International Monetary Fund.

Gold has jumped nearly 15 percent since the beginning of this month as investors poured money into the precious metal after the dollar fell to a record low against the euro. Gold bought 200 tons of bullion from the IMF.

The central banks of Russia and Sri Lanka have separately said they had bought gold to diversify their assets.

The market gained further on Wednesday after Indian newspaper Economic Times reported that Reserve Bank of India (RBI) could buy the IMF's remaining volume of gold, now the subject of negotiations.

The newspaper quoted an Indian government official as saying: "[The] RBI is an independent body and the government does not interfere in its affairs. It will get the gold if to bid successful and at the price it has offered."

Spot gold rose to an all-time high of $1,178.60 an ounce after the India report. Prices later eased to $1,177.30, still up 0.8 percent from the previous close in New York, which topped the previous high of $1,173.50 hit on Monday.

Dec gold futures for December delivery also rose to a record high of $1,178.10. The previous record high was the $1,174.00 marked on Monday.

The US dollar, meanwhile, held near a six-week low against the euro Wednesday while the Australian dollar gained on the greenback and the Japanese currency after an upbeat speech from a central banker and a rise in construction work. Reuters

Japan export rebound eases recession fears

TOKYO—JAPAN'S ECONOMY GREW IN OCtober thanks to robust shipments to Asia, suggesting that a strong recovery in the region will support the country's export-driven economy for the rest of this year.

Declines in exports also slowed compared with a year ago, easing concerns among some economists that Japan's economy will go through a double dip.

Japan's economy is still powering ahead, and there are signs of recovery in domestic demand in other important markets such as the United States, that should support demand for Japan's goods, economists say.

Still, Japan's growth has been slow to progress, showing domestic consumption is remarkably weak because of an aging population and that the economy is vulnerable to shocks.

The real exports index, compiled by the Bank of Japan, rose 3.5 percent to its highest level since January last year, following a 1.1 percent climb in September.

Compared with a year ago, Japan's exports fell 23.2 percent in October, less than a median market forecast for a 28.5 percent decline and slower than a 30.4 percent annual decline the previous month, the Finance Ministry data showed.

Imports to Asia, which account for more than a half of Japan's total shipments, fell 15 percent in October from a year ago, the slowest pace of decline in one year.

Shipments to the United States fell 37.6 percent in October from September, slower than a 39.9 percent annual decline the previous month. Reuters

The rebound in exports has been a major driving force behind Japan's economy. The economy grew 1.2 percent in the three months to September after a revised 0.7 percent expansion in the preceding quarter. Reuters

US Q3 economic growth revised down

But recovery intact; confidence up

WASHINGTON—THE US ECONOMY grew more slowly than first thought in the third quarter, but a fifth month of gains in home prices in September and an improvement in consumer morale signaled the nascent recovery was intact.

In its second estimate of third quarter gross domestic product published on Tuesday, the Commerce Department said the economy expanded at a 2.8 percent annual rate, probably ending the most painful US recession in 75 years.

It was slower than the previous estimate of 3.5 percent but still the fastest pace since the third quarter of 2007, reflecting government fiscal stimulus. The new estimate was slightly below expectations for a growth rate of 2.9 percent.

That helped to push stocks on Wall Street lower as investors shrugged off two other reports showing home prices continued their gains in September and consumers were a bit more optimistic this month, despite high unemployment.

The blue chip Dow Jones industrial average ended down 17.24 points or 0.19 percent, a day after making a 13 month high. US government bond prices rose, also boosted by solid demand in an auction of the year Treasury notes.

"We are still on the right path and a double-dip (recession) is not on the cards," said Jonathan Basile, an economist at Credit Suisse in New York.

With federal programs the main force behind the renewed, some economists are wary of risks of a double-dip recession—a recovery where output perks up briefly only to fall again when government support ends.

Minutes of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting early this month released on Tuesday showed officials at the US central bank viewed the recovery as durable, although they expected unemployment to rise further.

The Fed set interest rates to near zero last December and has committed to keep them low for an extended period to aid the recovery that officials said would continue at a slow pace relative to historical experience.

Economists expect the US unemployment rate to climb from its current 10.2 percent high of 10.3 percent. President Barack Obama is under pressure to find ways to spur job growth without unduly fueling an already record budget deficit.

The setback in growth in the July-September period, after four straight quarters of declining output, followed a 6.7 percent contraction in the April-June period.

Output was constrained by consumer spending that was not as robust as first thought. Strong imports and weak investment in commercial buildings also held back growth.

But corporate profits surged as businesses raised output even as they were cutting payrolls.

Yet another sign of stability in a sector that was at the heart of the recession, the Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller index of home prices in 20 metropolitan areas rose 0.3 percent in September. Analysts said a tax credit for first time homebuyers helped support the market.

An index published by the US Federal Housing Finance Agency found prices unchanged in September.

Separately, the Conference Board's index of consumer attitudes increased slightly to 49.5 in November from 48.7 in October.

Rebounds in US property sectors and consumer confidence are prerequisites for a sustainable economic recovery.

Tuesday's GDP data showed imports into the United States were revised higher, showing more domestic demand was used by overseas producers. Imports jumped at 23.8 percent annual rate, the biggest gain since the second quarter of 1980, instead of 20.4 percent.

The rise in imports eclipsed a strong recovery in exports, thanks to a weak US dollar, leaving a wider trade gap that took off just one half a percentage point from GDP.

"Both (exports and imports) grew very strongly and indicated that global trade was returning to normal. Further small increases in the net trade deficit can be expected and will be a drag on future GDP growth," said Brian Nibler, chief North American economist at S&P Forbes in New York.

A drop in the construction of nonresidential structures also restrained growth in the last quarter. Commercial building activity dropped at a 11.3 percent pace rather than 9 percent, as previously reported, highlighting the problems in commercial real estate.

It marked just over half a percentage point off GDP growth.

Consumer spending, which normally accounts for more than two thirds of US economic activity, rose at a 2.9 percent rate, instead of the 3.1 percent pace reported last month.

It was the biggest rise since the first quarter of 2007 and represented a turnaround from a 0.6 percent annual quarter fall. Businesses also reduced inventories at a slightly faster rate than had been anticipated.

While that revision ensured third quarter GDP growth, analysts said it helps lay the groundwork for future production. Reuters

A TOURIST walks past a giant gift box displayed for the up coming Christmas festival at shopping mall in Bangkok. Thailand's economy shrank by 2.8 percent year-on-year in the third quarter, signalling improvement on the previous quarter as export and tourism revenues pick up, official figures showed. AFP

Awaited deal to sell GM's Saab collapses

DETROIT—A DEAL FOR GENERAL Motors Co. to sell Saab collapsed on Tuesday when the buyer pulled out, in a move that threatens a 60-year-old Swedish auto brand with closure after recurring losses.

GM had been aiming to close a deal by the end of next month to sell Saab to a partnership led by the Swedish luxury car builder Koenigsegg and backed by China's Beijing Automotive Industrial Holding Co (BAIC).

Koenigsegg, a tiny Swedish company that listed builds sports cars that sell for $1 million, said it was pulling out of the deal because of the risk of delays in closing five months after reaching a preliminary deal with GM.

That came as a surprising setback for GM, which has been working to shed brands as part of a more narrowly focused auto strategy after emerging from a bankruptcy in July, backed by over $50 billion in US government financing.

Closure of Saab, set up in Trollhattan, Sweden, production hub also would threaten over 5,000 jobs and scotch a plan spearheaded by the Swedish government to help finance a restructuring of the company.

Financing the Saab sale had been seen as a major challenge for Koenigsegg even after Chinese state-run BAIC said in September that it would take a minority stake in the company.

BAIC said it was disappointed the deal had fallen through and was reviewing its options but remained committed to becoming a truly global company.

"With regard to Koenigsegg's withdrawal, we will carefully evaluate this project anew and make appropriate arrangements," BAIC said in a statement.

A tentative deal reached by GM to sell its Saab brand to Dendo Automotive Group Inc. also collapsed at the end of September, just before it was expected to close.

Chief Executive Pete Henderson said GM would take the next few days to consider the options for Saab. "We're obviously very disappointed with the decision," he said.

GM's 13-member board is scheduled to meet next Tuesday in Detroit for a regular monthly meeting and the question of what to do with Saab will now lead the agenda, said one person with close knowledge of the matter.

There are no other bidders for the brand, meaning that GM's only option would be to restart the sale process or opt for closure, the person said. Reuters

Asia shares up; Europe set to follow

HONG KONG/SEOUL—ASIAN STOCKS rose yesterday after the Federal Reserve raised US growth forecasts for 2010.

European shares were seen rising on the improved prospects for the US economy and US S&P 500 futures were up 0.3 percent.

The dollar fell to its lowest in seven weeks against the yen and remained under pressure against other major currencies on a combination of factors including expectations that US interest rates will remain low for some time.

Spot gold, which has risen 10 percent so far this month, held above $1,177.4 per ounce after hitting a high of $1,178.3 on a weakening dollar and the India's Financial Chronicle newspaper report.

"The India report has certainly helped to push the momentum in the market higher," said Eastern Resources, head of trading at Investec Australia.

Asian stock markets held firm, with the MSCI index of Asia Pacific stocks ended outside Japan rising 0.81 percent. The Thomson Reuters index of regional shares was up 1.29 percent.

Tokyo stock market's benchmark Nikkei average opened higher after shifting to a four-month intraday low, but the outlook remained murky on doubts about the health of the world's second-largest economy.

No confidence in Japan's economy meant investment markets have been reflecting some of that concern with the stock market trailing rest of the region significantly these past few weeks.

"There is uncertainty about the outlook for corporate revenues in an appreciating yen environment," Toshiro Muto, chief of Bank of Tokyo Institute of Research and former Deputy Bank of Japan Governor, told a news conference in Hong Kong.

"There is an observation that Japanese banks are strengthening capital procurement. And that, although the main reason changes in the Japanese government have created uncertainty about Japanese policies."

Pension funds have been cutting stocks holdings and increasing exposure to foreign holdings to diversify and boost returns, analysts said.

The MSCI index of non-Japanese Asia Pacific stocks has jumped 66 percent so far this year, whereas the Nikkei average is up just 7 percent over the same period.

Investors in Asian stock markets are maintaining a wary eye on the pace of recovery in US consumption, with shopping activities on this week's so-called black Friday likely to provide an early guide.

Australian stocks and the Aussie dollar were both boosted by upbeat consumer confidence figures, which signalled boosted expectations that the central bank could rise rates next week.

US crude oil prices rebounded above $76 a barrel after falling 2 percent in the previous session on disappointing US growth and data showing a big build in crude inventories, both signalling weak demand in the world's top energy user. Reuters

PRICE CRISIS

World Bank to start agriculture fund with $1.5B

WASHINGTON—THE WORLD BANK will start a trust fund to boost agriculture in poor countries with an initial $1.5 billion, its president Robert Zoellick said on Tuesday, warning of the risk of another food price crisis.

Crop shortages in India and the Philippines combined with increased speculation in commodity markets by investment funds have increased the risk that food prices could spike, as happened in 2008, Zoellick said.

"I'm not forecasting this. I'm just saying we have to anticipate this as a possible risk," he told reporters on the sidelines of a food economy event at Brookings Institution.

More than 1 billion people are now chronically hungry as food prices have been slow to fall from last year's record highs, and as nations grapple with the global economic downturn, United Nations agencies have said.

The world's richest nations pledged to give $20 billion over three years to help small farmers in developing countries grow more food, but diplomats and aid groups have estimated only $3 billion appears to be new spending.

Asked whether he thought the $20 billion would be new spending or money diverted from existing aid programs, Zoellick said: "From what I can see so far, it's going to be a mixture, as those things usually are."

The World Bank was asked by the Group of 20 nations in September to create a fund to help quickly disburse the pledges.

"I'd like (the World Bank) to get more (of the $20 billion promised) but the key thing is that people keep their pledges," Zoellick told reporters, noting that some aid may be delivered bilaterally or through other multilateral agencies.

"My key point is, let's get these things up and running," he said.

The World Bank fund will pool money from the United States, Canada and Spain, Zoellick said, and the European Commission will also add funds.

Climate change and the other factors that caused the run-up in food prices last year remain risks, said Joachim Uberman, head of the UN's World Food Program.

"I don't think it was a one-off phenomenon," Uberman said.

"I think what it was was more of a wake up call that exposed built-from vulnerability in the system, thanks to a weak US dollar leaving a wider trade gap that took off just over half a percentage point from GDP.

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BUSINESS

IMF now expects RP to grow by 1.5% in 2009

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY fund yesterday raised its economic growth forecast for the country, while it urged the Philippine government to curb its widening budget gap and save around cuts only when recovery is on solid footing.

The IMF is now expecting Philippine gross domestic product to grow 1.5 percent in 2009—higher than a previous estimate of 1.0 percent, and accelerate by 3.3 percent in 2010, led by private consumption.

"Leading indicators suggest further expansion in the period ahead, although the successive typhoons could dent growth temporarily," the multilateral institution said in a statement following a periodic review of the Philippine economy.

A major boost to the economy will be remittances from Filipinos working overseas, which fuel domestic consumption. IMF experts seek them to grow 4 percent in 2010 after rising 4 percent this year.

The Philippine government expects GDP to grow 0.0-1.0 percent this year, and by 2.0-3.0 percent in 2010, after expanding 1.5 percent last year.

Along with a recovering economy, the IMF said inflation would also rise to average 3.1 percent in 2009, up from a previous forecast of 2.8 percent. Inflation should average 4.3 percent in 2010 versus an earlier estimate of 4.5 percent.

The IMF also raised its 2009 balance of payments surplus projection for the country to $6 billion from $4.9 billion previously, but expects the surplus to drop to $4.5 billion in 2010.

Gov't urged to cap budget deficit at 3.5% of GDP

The IMF said it agrees with the Philippine central bank to keep interest rates on hold at record lows.

"The weak growth momentum, well-anchored inflation expectations, and contained cost pressures suggest monetary policies should remain accommodative.

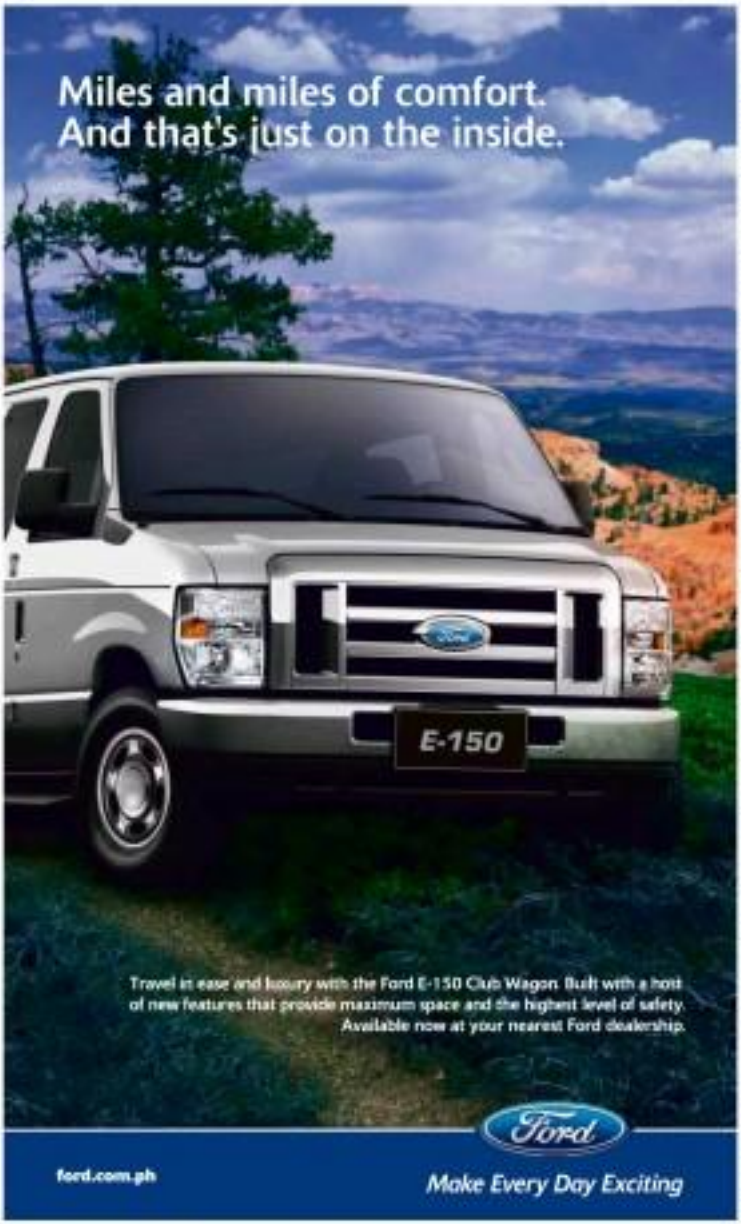
"Monetary tightening should commence only when the recovery is on a solid footing," IMF said.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has kept its key overnight borrowing rate at a record low of 4 percent since July, and analysts do not expect a hike until at least the second quarter of 2010.

The IMF also urged the government to limit its budget gap at 3.5 percent of GDP.

The Philippines' budget deficit shot up to P206.1 billion ($4.7 billion) in the first 10 months of the year, considering the state's full-year target of P250 billion, as revenue collection remained weak.

Economists say the government's fiscal gap could hit P500 billion this year, or 5.0 percent of GDP. Reuters



Dutch bank out to back expanding RP firms

By Doris C. Dumlao

DUTCH FINANCIAL GIANT ING, WHICH operates a robust wholesale bank in the Philippines, is keen on finding top-tier Philippine corporations that are seeking fresh opportunities for regional expansion.

Bank's top officials also expect retail-bread offerings to remain as the dominant source of financing for local corporations in the country now, given ample liquidity in the domestic financial system.

According to Himraj Bahl-El, managing director at ING's wholesale clients and corporate finance for Asia, the bank not only survived the crippling financial crisis, but was able to also undertake a large array of lending activities, such as merger and acquisition advisory in the Philippines and across Southeast Asia.

Bahl, a Filipino executive based in Singapore, said in a briefing that Asia would be the place to do business for world-oriented companies seeking growth and liquidity.

ING country manager for the Philippines Consuelo Garcia said that aside from tapping the domestic growth of the bank's Philippine clients, the bank would help these top corporations look for new businesses outside the country.

"These rules are doing good business here are capable of doing it elsewhere," Garcia said, noting however that most companies would be cautious in entering unfamiliar markets.

In terms of M&A activity, ING has been active in deals involving power and utilities sectors, especially with the government's privatization scheme.

Unless a company would embark on a large-scale acquisition, Garcia said, the offerings of peso-denominated retail bonds would still be the preferred source of funding for many corporations, many of which would like to avoid foreign-exchange risks.

ING is the financial advisor to the ongoing merger between Lucio Tan's holding arms Philippine Holdings Inc. and Allied Banking Corp., as well as the sale by the latter of Bank of the Philippine Islands of a 51-percent stake to the insurance subsidiary Ayala Life Assurance Inc. (Ayala Life) to Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co. (Philamlife) in order to form a bancassurance partnership.

Garcia said bancassurance, or the sale of life insurance products through bank branches, offered a big potential for growth for banks with a large distribution network.

For foreign investors seeking opportunities in the Philippines, Bahl said there would be opportunities in new areas such as natural resources as well as business process outsourcing and knowledge process outsourcing.

ING, which has an asset base of about $300 to $400 million in the Philippines, was among the 10 new foreign banks that put up a full branch after the banking sector was liberalized to foreign players in the mid-1990s.

It was the first foreign bank to upgrade its commercial bank license to a universal license.

As of 2008, ING has booked up its regulatory capital in the Philippines to P10.16 billion—way above the minimum P4.5 billion requirement for universal banks—as the bank sought to expand its financial activities.

This year, ING has acted as advisor to the winning bid of Absolut Distar for the $447 million Tiwi-Makban geothermal plant and also for the same company's $491 million administrative contract for the purchase of the commercial capacity of the 700-megawatt coal-fired Daguhan power plant.

LIFESTYLE Food

How to prepare roasted free-range chicken for Thanksgiving

WHILE PEOPLE ARE BUSY ORDERING turkey, and are ranks are busy stuffing the bird, we have a colleague who encouraged us remain as one. Being French, I believe, given him the birds rights.

Chef Cyrille Soenen deviated from the traditional Thanksgiving fare of choice. He instead chose to roast a Bresse free rapon (chapon in French)—truffle scented, stuffed with chestnuts and duck liver, served with braised sprouts, baby potatoes, pork sausage and gravy juice.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Maggie Aglibot

Sounds sinful and expensive? You bet! From the description alone, one must eat it with the palate up.

This is the Bella Beyer of birds for the season at P33,000, weighing 4.5 kilos, good for 12-16 people.

The choice to use capon, according to chef Soenen is because "in Bresse, I found capon that is prepared as we do in France, in the pure countryside tradition—raised free range between 180-200 days, fed with yellow corn and soya.

"It consumes 85-95 kilos of food during their life span and milk is added to their diet during the 80 days of their lives."

He explains the painstaking transformation of the capon—from bird to a dish of pure gastronomy delight.

"First, I remove the big and totally deboned them. I stuff it with chestnuts, duck liver, mushroom and some it with truffle. The leg I cook like a ballotine, while the breast, I roast."

Always

BE SAFE

FROM WATERBORNE DISEASES

Waterborne diseases are still a serious threat in our country, especially during this season of rains and floods.

These diseases can be caused by pathogenic microorganisms which are directly transmitted when contaminated drinking water is consumed. According to the World Health Organization, waterborne diseases are responsible for the deaths of 1.8 million people every year – with diarrhea, the leading cause of childhood deaths.

Diarrhea is a form of bacterial infection. Other bacterial diseases are cholera, dysentery, and typhoid.

Other forms of disease that can be transmitted through water are protozoal infections like amoebiasis, parasitic infections like hydatidosis, and viral infections like Hepatitis A.

One of the most effective ways to avoid waterborne diseases is to be careful about the quality of your drinking water. This should always be stored in a cool (4-15 degrees), dark (away from sunlight) and dry (avoided humidity) place. It should be kept away from substances like chemicals, detergents and the likes.

Of course, you should make sure your water is safe for drinking. One of the safest forms of water is distilled water like Wilkins.

Wilkins Distilled Drinking Water follows a set of high-quality standards upheld since 1912. Wilkins goes through a state-of-the-art purification and distillation process in an enclosed environment to ensure that the water comes back in its original form—H2O. That means Wilkins has no dissolved solids, chemical impurities, microorganisms and other harmful bacteria. Untouched by human hands, it is then packed into sterilized bottles that are automatically sealed to prevent any contamination.

With Wilkins Distilled Drinking Water, you and your kids are always safe from waterborne diseases.

Wilkins
DISTILLED DRINKING WATER
Pure & safe without a doubt.

USE OF lamb boulangere

French chef tours culinary schools, holds demos in Manila

By Irene C. Perez

THE CENTER FOR CULINARY Arts (CCA) brought French chef Eric Chauffleur to Manila to share his expertise in French cuisine to aspiring Filipino culinary students.

Chauffleur is a senior instructor at the prestigious Institut Paul Bocuse culinary school in France since 2007. He is the resource person of the Paul Bocuse Philippines Master Chef Series, a string of activities that highlighted the school's 15th anniversary.

"I was about 14 or 15 when I started interest in cooking. I was with mom and grandma in the kitchen all the time," Chauffleur said. "Since then, I started working in France, Canada and England, and I have been in the food industry for over 20 years. That's also how I learned to speak English."

He also cooks Italian, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese food, but is most comfortable doing French, pastries-by Bocuses.

French kitchen

It is Chauffleur's first trip in the Philippines. He finds Filipino food great and was able to try out local faves to accompany like C2 Classic Cuisine, Courtage and Guimaras.

"The dishes are great. But I can't take heat," he said, laughing.

The amiable chef did a cooking demo titled "Bocuse for Your Kitchen" last Nov. 10 at the CCA kitchen at Eastwood Mall. CCA students, restaurateurs, families and journalists watched him as he prepared authentic French specialties like Fresh Cod Seared with Fine Ratatouille and Au chevre Sauce; Puffed Pastry with Asparagus and Shrimps with Mousseline Sauce; and for dessert, Glazed Nougat with Passion and Hazelnuts. The audience willingly sampled the scrumptious items.

"The students were initially afraid to talk to me, but after a few chats, everyone was friendly and accommodating," he said.

And for his tips for young chefs who want to make it big: "Be professional. Express stress but be your best. It's not exactly as you see it on TV, but it is fun if you are passionate about it."

Chauffleur's Philippine tour also included a classic French cuisine demo and a culinary backstage tour for faculty and professionals at CCA Kitchenart. He also participated in The "Bocuse in CCA" gala dinner at the Oriental restaurant echoed in SM Mall of Asia, and his last stop was in a food conference at Sonnet Ridge Hotel in Tagaytay.

"I am definitely going back to the Philippines, but next time for a vacation on the beach!" he cheerfully said.

One-stop culinary center

The CCA Kitchen (tel. 09422182) 3D and 4D, e-mail marketing@cca.manila.com; www.cca.manila.com) at the third level of Eastwood Mall in Quezon City was also recently launched.

The satellite kitchen, which houses Courtage restaurant, offers professionals and enthusiasts a variety of cooking courses. Food to find culinary tools and ingredients, kits for kids, kitchen apparel like chef's jackets and aprons, and cute cookbooks are available at its Culinary Store.

Courses on food photography, food styling and food writing will be available soon," said Anne Nemenzo, CCA PR manager.

Short courses under the International Division include Cuisines of the World, Entertaining at Home, Healthy Cooking, Wine Appreciation, Pastel and Wine Pairing, and Baking Classes; while the Professional Continuing Education Section will have Restaurant Tours, the Chocolate Course and Master Chef Series.

Courses for kids will also be offered.

PUFFED Pastry with Asparagus and Shrimps with Mousseline Sauce

GLAZED Nougat with Praline and Hazelnuts

CHEF Eric Chauffleur

FRESH Cod Seared with Fine Ratatouille and Anchovy Sauce

Family dining 'like never before' at Intramuros resto

THE MOM OWNERS OF Baricuatro, Ilaia and Beatrice Pimentel, are spicing up the landmark Intramuros dining place with "La Vie en Rose"—a new culinary and service matters meant as a homage to co-founder Rose Dy Pimentel.

Chef Gessie Chikiamco, after a two-year sojourn in Lyon, France, along with partners Bonnie Pimentel and Roberto Caballero, collaborated on the restaurant's renovation. The "La Vie en Rose" philosophy simple says, "Family dining not like never before."

Top offerings include log of lamb; baked salmon dressed with "fish scales" of garlic mushroom and tartar; and oh-shell crabs with crunchy crust, tangy sauce and prime rib, crowned by a dessert of pears stewed in red wine.

"La Vie en Rose" is by reservation only. It is available at Restrada in Intramuros and dyals Mabuhay, Westgate.

BAKED salmon filet in puff pastry

CRISPY salt-boiled crabs with sauce vierge

1 PRE-HEAT oven at 220°F. Season potatoes and carrots with oil, salt and pepper, then sprinkle with rosemary. Bake for 30 minutes until light golden. Set aside.

2 HEAT olive pan and sauté garlic. Add onions until caramelized. Add calamari. Mix well.

3 ADD SHRIMPS, mussels, clams and fish cubes. Sauté all the seafood until it's half-cooked.

4 SEASON with salt and pepper. Add chili paprika and curry powder. Pour in tomato sauce and cream sauce. Mix well.

Seafood Au Gratin

Step By Step

SEAFOOD Au Gratin

By Yvngie Bago-Reyes

IT'S ALWAYS BEST TO PREPARE your Christmas menu as early as one to avoid holiday stress. Top Seafood Au Gratin can be an excellent addition to your buffet spread. Since it's a very simple seafood dish mixed with veggies and seasoned with herbs and spices, it's sure to be a hit among those who enjoy creamy meals.

This quick-to-prepare Seafood Au Gratin makes use of fresh seafood, including mussels, clams, squid, shrimps and fish (cream dory, apahap or maya-maya). It can either be served in individual baking dishes or made in one large dish. The shellfish can be pre-boiled for easy cooking preparation.

"You can also replace the vegetables with your favorite pasta, such as spaghetti, linguini, fettuccine or macaroni," says Allora Guevara, managing director of Bangun (3-5, Dao-yphon Mall, Bonifacio Globe, Market! City, 09918 15 371). The recently renovated Bangun in Bacwell features a more relaxed and comfy ambiance for the family.

After the seafood is sautéed and spiced up, it's then covered with aluminum foil to seal its goodness and aroma, and then baked to perfection.

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbagoreyes@superstar.com.ph.

Ingredients:
300 g shrimps
300 g calamari
300 g fish cubes
20 pcs mussels
20 pcs clams
1 c tomato sauce
1 c cream sauce
1 tsp chili powder
1 tsp curry powder
½ g basil
10 g cilantro
100 g potatoes
100 g carrots
100 g broccoli
Salt and pepper to taste
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp garlic, chopped
1 whole onion, sliced
Rosemary, chopped and dried
Mozzarella cheese
Parmesan cheese

5 ADD boiled carrots and potatoes.

6 ADD broccoli, basil leaves and cilantro. Transfer mixture to a baking dish.

7 GRATE with mozzarella cheese and parmesan cheese.

8 COVER with aluminum foil and bake for 10 minutes at 180°F.

9 BEFORE serving, make a small incision in the middle of the foil to let off steam. Serve warm.

How to prepare roasted . . .

From page B1

"I apply two cooking methods for tsa and because because the cooking times for both are different. So when you taste this dish, every single part of it is tasty and moist. The high fat content of capon also helps harden the chicken while cooking."

So if you have manok na gamela kita and can afford to celebrate Thanksgiving in style, the whole roasted capon will be available for takeout today and throughout the holiday season.

To have a taste of it, dine at CQ's restaurant (tel. 8896728, 09175805865) today as the chef has it, per individual portion on his menu for lunch and dinner as part of their Thanksgiving offerings.

Capon surgical tools

Speaking of capons, I recall this to be a lost and dying art. In my youth, I recall my late tia the capon expert. These days however, real capons are hard to find, unless you decide to do it yourself. But that is so much trouble.

After talking to Cyrille, I decided to call Tina Monalisa Papillon, owner of Nonna Emma (tel 0917-5375639) in Alviz. I was quite surprised to learn that they now have capons as I recall them to sell only free range chicken, eggs and pork.

I thought it time to pay my respects to Nonna in her all the efforts they had put in to producing poultry and poultry byproducts of the finest quality.

Papillon shares tidbits of information about their latest product, the capon chicken.

"I started doing capon only last year, although many clients have been requesting us to produce capons. I didn't know how and went through your lengths, asking veterinarians if they knew how to do it, unfortunately, none of them were able to teach me.

"So my friend's partner, Isabelle Gerard Fayel,

CAPONIZING tools

ton and I decided to invite our friend, Marcus Wermuth, who is France does the caponization of thousands of roosters during July and August for the Christmas season. Capons need two to six months to grow.

"Marcus was here in May 2005 and we had our week of caponizing sessions in our farm in Alviz. In July of the same year, I went to the southwest of France with her to continue my practice. To date, I personally do the procedure on our capons.

"The process of turning a rooster into capon is known as caponization. This happens between six and 20 weeks of age, depending on the producer and the breed.

"The age-old tradition is to surgically remove the testes of the cockerel. This neutralizes the bird's testosterones. One key point with capons is that if the caponizing is not done properly, the pairing of the testes will grow again, thus, a capon that is not a good capon. A real caponized rooster should have a very small wattle."

Toffee pudding

You must, must, must try Karen Young's Sticky Toffee Pudding! It is so good: the cake is soft, laden with dates and generously topped with toffee. It's best eaten when heated for 10 seconds in the microwave. At P300 per bowl (tel. 09.17.3299986), it is a luxury that is priced just right and allows us to indulge.

This is indeed my personal Thanksgiving dessert of choice.

Classes

Get discounts for my Thanksgiving and Holiday Cooking Class Promos. I will be teaching in Davao and will be conducting my Mindanao Culinary Heritage Tour (tel. 9286296, 9273008, 0474744, 0908-2372346) in February.

E-mail the author at sopeta@pworld.com.ph.

Fave hams for the holidays

FOR YEARS NOW, South Christmas plates have taken place of honor among holiday favorites.

The classic three-in-then has an extra juiciness after a special mix of spices that gives it a delectable smokey taste.

The traditional three-shape then offers an unmistakable blend of sweet and salty tastes.

For a taste of the old world, there's the roasted, boneless Jamon de Bola with its blend of Spanish seasonings.

Pork's Boneless Ham, seven whole, has sugar glazed and golden brown skin.

Meat lovers will enjoy Swift's Deboned Ham, ham leg that's all meat up to the last bite, and moderately cured with salt to capture the taste of traditional ham.

The Swift Premium Ham has a choice blend of spices and flavors and a unique sweet yellow sugar glaze.

Try these recipes and see why South Christmas Ham has become a part of holiday traditions.

SWIFT pear shape ham

Pear-Shape Ham with Fruit Sauce

1 pc Swift Pear Shape Ham
1 ½ c fruit cocktail syrup
¼ c brown sugar
½ tsp ground cloves
¼ c water
2 tbsp cornstarch
2 c drained canned fruit cocktail

Boil off wrappings of Pear Shaped Ham, slice into ¼-inch thickness. Arrange on a shallow baking pan. Bake in a preheated oven at 325°F for 20 minutes.

Arrange ham slices on serving platter.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan, boil together fruit cocktail syrup, sugar and cloves.

Blend in water with 2 tbsp cornstarch.

Simmer till sauce thickens slightly. Add drained fruit cocktails for last minute.

Pour fruit sauce on arranged ham slices. Serve remaining sauce in a bowl.

Festival ham with Peach Glaze

1 pc Swift Festival Ham, fully thawed
1 can sliced peaches in syrup, cubed
3 tbsp Buttercloth blue-prune
½ c packed light brown sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place ham in a shallow pan lined with aluminum foil.

Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes or in a turbo broiler at 325°F.

Slice ham into about ¼-inch thick pieces and arrange on a serving dish.

Meanwhile, prepare glaze. Drain peach cubes and reserve 3 tbsp syrup.

In a small saucepan, combine margarine, sugar and reserved syrup.

Cook over medium heat with constant stirring, until sugar is melted.

Add peach cubes. Heat through.

To serve, spoon peaches over sliced festival ham.

Deboned ham with Apple-Mustard Sauce

1.5-1.6 kg Swift Deboned Ham, fully thawed
Brown sugar
½ c apple jelly
1 tbsp prepared mustard
1½ tsp lemon juice
1/4 tsp ground cloves
Apples
Oranges
Green grapes
Cherries

Preheat oven to 350°F. Remove plastic/netting and gently peel off skin.

Place ham, fat side up in a shallow baking pan lined with aluminum foil; rub brown sugar all over the surface.

Bake in preheated oven for about 30 minutes or till golden brown. If using a turbo broiler, set at 325°F and bake for 30 minutes. Set aside.

In a small saucepan, melt apple jelly. Remove from heat.

Whisk in remaining ingredients except apples, green grapes and cherries.

Cool at room temperature. Glaze ham slightly with apple-mustard glaze and cover remaining glaze on the side.

Garnish as desired.

WHAT PINOYS LOVE BEST ABOUT THE JOLLIBEE CHICKEN BARBECUE

Ask Pinoys to describe a sumptuous chicken barbecue meal and among the first things that come to mind are the juicy meat and the delicious barbecue flavor. And these exact qualities are what Pinoys love most about Jollibee's new creation – the Jollibee Chicken Barbecue. Indeed, Jollibee has mastered the craft of coming up with new and great-tasting products that are sure to satisfy the discerning Filipino palate.

"The Jollibee Chicken Barbecue tastes like my mom's homemade chicken barbecue. It has the right amount of sweetness, making it mouth-watering and simply sumptuous," explains Rose Bobis, a 33-year-old software development analyst.

"Hala kain lang nang kain, kung sa bang kung barbecue! The barbecue dipping sauce also has a lasting taste, and the java rice tastes good," says 39-year-old Eugene Pineda, who takes his kids to Jollibee every weekend.

"The Jollibee Chicken Barbecue is so tasty, my kids and I love it," adds 40-year-old Tet Valencia, mother of two boys.

"Hmmm talagang yung Jollibee Chicken Barbecue and the sauce!" adds 13-year old Nicole who enjoys dining out at Jollibee with her 43-year-old engineer dad, Butch Cruz and the rest of their family.

Twenty-eight-year-old Kerwin Tang, an IT analyst, recalls when the Jollibee Chicken Barbecue first hit the stores in Metro Manila. "We were hearing a lot of good feedback about it. One night, we were so determined to give it a try so we stopped after seeing the first Jollibee sign we saw on our way. The sojourner was worth it for a taste of the new Jollibee Chicken Barbecue!"

"One thing I really love about Jollibee Chicken Barbecue is its special marinade and the way it's cooked." — 31-year-old mom, Mary Jones

"It's juicy with a flavorful sauce," shares married couple 30-year-old Bel and 40-year-old Carlos Cruz.

"I love the right amount of marinade! The chicken meat is soft and the barbecue flavor seeped right through the chicken. The best part? The premium chicken's generous serving along with its reasonable price," says Bobby Torres, 36, an online editor.

Graduate student 30-year-old Francis Quina confirms: "The marinated chicken was good. I also liked the extra barbecue sauce on the side. I've actually ordered it so many times already!"

You can get your Jollibee Chicken Barbecue as a one-piece solo meal for P85 and as a two-piece solo meal for P115. Value meals, which come with a regular drink, are priced at P95 and P125 for the one-piece and two-piece sets, respectively. The Jollibee Chicken Barbecue is also served with its perfect accompaniment, a flavorful barbecue dipping sauce and mouthwatering java rice, for a truly memorable dining experience. Don't get left behind and find out why a growing number of people here and keep coming back for more of this heritage and delicious new creation only from Jollibee!

Gourmet crepes

DINING OUT

BRITTANY CRÊPE RECREPE AND CREPERIE at La Crêperie (G/, Eastwood Mall Libis) and Le Bretonne served with homemade salted butter caramel and whipped cream. La Crêperie also proffers crêpes with side salad.

Tandoori chicken

The Bellevue Hotel's Café d'Asie (tel. 771-0101 Hotels Curry Nights all Fridays and Saturdays of November. Dishes include hot bodon Vegetable Curry, Tandoori Chicken with Naan Bread, Biryani Rice, and Pinat Thai Egg Noodles with Crispy Squid.

Cookies and mine

Seattle's Best Coffee Cafe (SBC) offers Cookies and Mini Blondie and Cookies and Mini Jackfolds. Seattle's Best Coffee also introduces the SBC Holiday Giveaway Promo. Collect 20 sticker's and get an SBC 2010 journal in red, black and pearl white. Get freebies worth P 1,000 of savings at Seattle's Best Coffee branches all throughout the year.

New York strips steaks

Burgoo serves affordable ribs and steaks, seasoned and grilled. Choose from Hickory Smoked Ribs, Texone and New York Strips Steaks. There are also Grilled Pork Chops and Lamb Chops and Oklahoma-style Grilled Baby Back Ribs. Burgoo is at Tomas Morato, QC, 3/F, Power Plant, Rockwell, Makati, The Podium, Ortigas Center, 2/L, 3/M Mall of Asia, 4/L, Robinsons Galleria, 3/L, G/F City The Block, North Edsa, 3/L, Fishermen's Place, Manila, and 2/L, SM Megamall.

Ribs in a bucket

Sundo's offers Ribs in a Bucket seasoned with New Orleans' herbs and spices then grilled. Sundo also serves Jambalaya, Seafood Samba, Mardi Gras Salad, Cajun Fried Chicken, Bayou's Stuffed Crabs, Gumbo in a/3/L, SM Mall of Asia, 3/L, SM The Block, North Edsa, 3/L, Fishermen's Place, Manila, and 2/L, SM Megamall.

BENTO BOODLE
Blackbeard's Seafood Island offers Bento Noodle and Crab Marinara at its outlets in UP Ayala land Technohub, Barangay UP Campus, QC (tel. 332-1314); Trinoma Mall, QC, 3/F, Mall 1888, Eastwood City Libis (F/ 2/3/4), Pasig Market, Market!, Fort Bonifacio Global City (BGC/UP); and Binagarbar Arcade, Araneta Center, Cubao (F/ 2/3/4).

CRABSHACK BURGER
Sizzlin' Pepper Steak offers Kalderi Burgers, Crabshack Burger, Chicken Kevin Burger, Ranchero Burger, Tete Cheese Burger.

FISHERMAN'S BOUILLABAISSE
Buffalo (G/L, Eastwood Mall, tel. 900-0886) offers Fisherman's Bouillabaisse—cerbo, Visayan sea bass, shrimp, dalagang bukid and dory fillet, calamari salad, bouillabaisse soup served with mantis (mashed potatoes and spices) and Aioli (garlic and mayo).

'SISIG EMPANADITA'
C2 Classic Cuisine (tel. 634-1313 for deliveries, www.c2cookinggroup.com) marks its 5th year on Nov. 27 (F, 2/L p.m., in all branches with a no-host buffet. The treats include pork barbecue, chicken inasal wings, squid balls wrapped in bacon, dinuguan, puto pao, sisig empanadita, bacon, okoy, lumpia, buto-buto, sago't gulaman and buko pandan. C2's branches are at Gateway Mega Promenade, Tagaytay City, Power Plant Mall Rockwell, Molinos Way, Robinsons Place Manila, The Ledge, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mission Enfrente, Greenhills/Ortigas, SM Mall of Asia complex: Aseana, Megamall, and soon to become Zone 2 at SM North Edsa.

TURON
ALL
MARUYA
THESE
DINUGUAN PUTO PAO
FOR
BAM-I
P155
CHICKEN INASAL WINGS
BECAUSE
PORK BBQ
WE'VE
SISIG EMPANADITA
JUST
SQUIDBALLS WITH BACON
TURNED
OKOY
5.

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2/L, Archaeology Section, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell
1/F, Mitchown Wing, Robinsons Place, Manila
2/L, Atrium, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong
2/L, Summit Ridge Promenade, Tagaytay
78 Maginoo St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan
Cinema, Bldg. A, SM01 SM Mall of Asia, Pasay City

From November 27 to 29 (Friday – sunday)
Tel No. 638-1313 / Cel No. 0998. 306.8217
c2classiccuisine@cookinggroup.com

Exclusive Drinks

Campaign on literacy to be launched today

TODAY, 5 'SIKI PAPUN LAUNCHES the advocacy campaign, "Isang Milyong Mangal Pa'o Sa Isang Milyong Pangarap." The campaign shall help provide undergo trained public-school children with school supplies and writing tools. Through this campaign, Siki Pupun endeavors to promote literacy and encourage undergo trained students to express themselves through writing and art. To be held at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Hotel Manila, the launch features celebrity advocacy ambassadors like Rico Puno, Christopher Roxas, Tessa Prieto-Valdes, Tim Yap, Joey Mead, JC Buendia and Raymond Isaac.

UP NCPAG conference

The University of the Philippines-National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG) will host the conference "Engaging the Filipino in Responsible Elections" today (tel. 426-1443). Invited speakers include UP President Emerlinda Roman, COMELEC Commissioner Gregorio Larrazabal, Sr. "Ismael Mayo" of United Nations Development Programme, and scholars from academic institutions offering public administration courses or fellowships. As the culminating activity, the SCPAG Alumni Homecoming will be held in the evening of Nov. 27. Dalton City Hall Mayor and NCPAGAA President Ike Ibarra will lead the ceremonies which include the launching of a refundable book featuring NCPAG's most outstanding alumni. NCPAG alumni and Zamboanga Sibugay Congressman Dulce Ann Hofer will inaugurate the NCPAG Alumni Foundation Garden.

German Christmas market

The first German Christmas Market (tel. 8403-073, 8403-129, 0917-8944 gaucha_dermacha_ke the Philippines dubbed 'Weihnachtsmarkt' 2009, will be held Dec. 4 at Ateneo High School (SEC-Field) and on Dec. 12-13, at The Terraces, Ayala Center, Cebu. Weihnachtsmarkt aims to share German Christmas traditions, as well as familiarize Filipinos with German language and culture. Throughout the day, a variety of activities will take place, choral singing competitions, raffle draws, snare-run running, cooking demos, games, trivia and photo contests. A scholarship in Germany awaits a lucky winner. Weihnachtsmarkt will also showcase food fro nothing De luxe delicacies such as Hoehl's baked stollen and ginger bread, sausages grilled over charcoal fire and stones with wurst & Weinchen.

Disney on Ice

Disney on Ice (tel. 911-0666; www.ticketnet.com.ph/tickets) is at Araneta Coliseum on Dec. 25-Jan. 3, 2010. The Disney land Adventure story features Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Pluto, Baloo, Snow White, Cinderella, Stitch, The Incredibles and Buzz Lightyear.

LIFESTYLE Food

Cakes, sweets and frozen delights–the best kind

RED VELVET Cake by Karen's Kitchen PHOTO BY JOEL NAVALTA

'Presenting five of the 24 Best Desserts to be presented by INQUIRER Lifestyle and SM Mall of Asia on Dec. 4'

By Vaughn Roga Reyes

IN A PLACE KNOWN AS A foodie haven, it's amazing how Cebu's Cafe Georg was able to carve a special niche for its Chocolate Decadence.

What started as a small corner at Ayala Center Cebu in 1998 has grown to become one of the city's "must-visit," almost in the same breath as Cebu's iconic danggit and dried mangoes.

Helmut Murray Ludo-Aicardo and Georgia Ludo run the luxury outlet, which offers meals such as grilled pork chops, Mexican salad and lasagna. But, of course, people mostly come for a slice of Chocolate Decadence.

The cake is among the 24 Best Desserts to be presented by Inquirer Lifestyle and SM Mall of Asia on Dec. 4, 3 p.m., at the SM Mall of Asia Atrium.

"Cafe Georg is all about simple food—unpretentious, down-to-earth and hearty, the kind of food you can eat everyday," says Ricardo (+6032) 416-8677 or (+63 917) 312-2527). The diners have opened another branch along Banilad Road.

"Dining at Cafe Georg is walking into a familiar territory where most customers have their favorite spot and know what to order without looking at the menu. For customers

CAKES 5D

TOP 10 TRENDS

CROSSINGS

The Holidays bring not only good cheer, warmth and great presents but also fantastic trends. Here are some quick tips on how to razzle and dazzle using the latest and hottest Holiday trends!

PEPLUM
Know your body! Opt for the one flattering peplum that allured you. Rather than using excess fabric, a fitted peplum won't hide your curves but will accentuate them. But if you want to add more curves to a simple dress, then flared pieces work best.

STRONG SHOULDER
Want to look striking but not overpowered? Get a strong shouldered blazer with skinny jeans and drapey top. But if you want to bring out the bounce inside, pair your strong shouldered top or jacket with a crisp pencil skirt and round platform pumps.

BIB NECKLACES
What a life without the drama! Add instant flair with statement necklaces. Perfect with simple silhouettes and halter dresses, these can instantly give you a glam score of 10. Plain tanks go from boring to double-take in a second! Just remember to keep your other accessories below the neck simple.

Shangri-La Plaza Mall • Trinoma • Quezon Avenue • The Ramp Glorietta • The Ramp Podium

CROSSINGS

Possibility Snakeskin Heels P1,495

CAGE SHOES
Get great gams? Show them off with cage shoes and short skirts or dresses. But remember: to wear simpler pieces with classic cuts to showcase your fantastic foot candy!

EMBELLISHMENTS
Beads, crystals, jewels, metals: the possibilities are endless! They instantly add color, depth and character to any outfit. You can go all sparkly and don a full-sequined dress or top.

But if you want to keep the shine to a minimum, wear an embellished headband, beaded belt or bullet flats.

CUTOUTS
Less is definitely more when you wear trendy peek-a-boo pieces. Get a dress in a classic shape (like a shift dress) but with strategic cut-outs and bring sexy back!

JEWEL TONES
Flip the romantic feminine with sapphire, ruby and emerald dresses in soft fabrics and long lines. Don't be afraid to layer on some accessories for this feminine and glamorous look.

METALLICS
For a quick-fuss look, go for a metallic dress or top. Get a beautifully draped piece, or one that hugs your every curve. Gold, silver and copper are classic, but don't be afraid to try out other colors like blue, green and even purple. Bright reflective pieces. If you're on the fence with color, choose one that will complement your skin tone best: white gold goes for cool to cold skin, while yellow gold goes for warm to cold skin. Opposite colors.

Mirrapaul jacket P 1,495

JACKETS
Work that corporate staple into something fashionable. Jackets bring out your feminine facade when layered with basic tanks and liquid leggings and power pumps but are also an unexpected delight when used with an ultra-feminine dress.

The Ramp Studded Tote P1,999

The Ramp Studded Mini P1,499

The Ramp Glitternit Pumps P 1,199

STUDS & RIVETS
Take a walk on fashion's wild side. A studded clutch, pump or belt will add that edgy, urban dynamic to any outfit. Just be sure to have one studded accessory/piece, so you still stay looking chic and classy. Not scary.

T's SEASON FOR GIVING

Intercontinental model, actress, and Project Runway Host, Teresa Herrera (T, as her family and friends call her) loves Christmas. She loves nothing more spending the holidays with her family and friends and getting their great gifts!

For her mom, T got a red tunic dress with a beaded belt from Wildflower (P1,995). She is truly her mom's daughter as both appreciate comfortable fashion. She also got her mother a posh silicon tea and coffee set for only P1,699.75! This goes to show that gifts need not eat your wallet out.

Power executive sister, Tina, the force behind Phil. Fashion Week and Ford Intermodel at Super Model of the World, a black leather structured carry- all (P1,695) is perfect for meetings.

For her creative sister, Rosario Herrera, T grabbed a blue patent clutch from Possibility. T says this creative sister is very discriminating when it comes to fashion. With the very on-trend design and luxe feel of the piece, Rosario will surely take this clutch to events and shows.

While for Jen Herrera, club owner and G-Mark boat shoes from Mundo ano it! With classic lines and made from quality leather. He'll surely look good while playing great mekks.

And lastly, for model and radio DJ, Vinky, T spotted a pair of purple cuffed heels from Possibility (P 2195). Made of genuine suede, this fashionable piece should suit the dynamic and youthful sister.

BIG STYLE FOR YOUR LITTLE ONES

We all want our children's growing up years to be ones they'll fondly remember. Mark those precious moments with clothes that complement their growing individuality and personality. With the newest collection from THE RAMP KIDS, children's fashion has surely moved on from the basic baby blues and pinks. Dress your princess up in a cutesy blue one-shoulder dress and she'll surely steal the show! Set her prancing around in a fire-engine red trench coat dress for fun fashion moments! Make your little boy dapper and happier in comfortable long sleeved tops and cargo pants. THE RAMP KIDS creates chic and comfortable pieces from high quality fabrics and accents. From family events to parties and school activities, your children will surely make it on the best-dressed list this holiday!

The Ramp Kids is exclusively available at Crossings Dept. Stores in Shangri-La Plaza, Trillanes, Quezon Ave., The Ramp Podium and The Ramp Glorietta.

CHOCOLATE Decadence by Cafe Georg (Cebu)

HOMEMADE Ice Cream by Gene Gonzales

BAVETTA by Gardenella Sweets (Batangas)

Cakes, sweets and frozen delights. . .

From page B1

who've moved out of Cebu, it is usually the first place they visit when they come home," she adds.

Macadamia Cheesecake

There is also something very familiar with Kitchen's Best White Chocolate Macadamia Brittle Cheesecake—a satiny smooth, melt-in-your-mouth cheesecake layered in white chocolate and macadamia praline crust.

Kitchen's first mobile number (09.17999KAKE) also offers other best-selling signature cakes such as Mango Jam Filled and Chocolate Obsession. But its piece de résistance has always been the cheesecake, which it served iced with whipped cream and drizzled with homemade macadamia brittle.

Red Velvet Cake

Red Velvet Cake, unavailable at the top bid of Kitchen's Kitchen, is still a crowd-pleasing dessert made. Kitchen's mobile number: 09173309983) learned the ropes right in the family kitchen. Baking goodies for the folks on weekends.

"I used to crack the eggs and hold the [mixing] egg beater. I felt nauseated every time my sister [is] made oatmeal cookies and [eats] for us. Then she baked yours are a three-dimensional impression of eating it one of my favorite parts of baking. Eating icing-rather than cake part."

Tonag told her first Black For our Cakes to escape hardest down by [see] when she was still in college. While living abroad, Karen took up cake decorating classes with fellow Kitchen's Heroes Helena. There was no stopping her from then on as she pursued her passion through trainings trips, lessons, readings and endless kitchen torture.

Red Velvet Cake, according to her, was borne out of her experiments in the kitchen. Little did she know it would one day become one of her bestsellers. She has now established Bay Area by Food Inc. with operations in Pulac Village, Makati.

Frozen goodies

Homemade Ice Cream may be a simple treat for a dessert, but it's nonetheless a big show on the business. It is made with carabao's milk and fresh fruits. Everything is made from scratch—no artificial flavors, coloring or preservatives.

"Baking is really a hobby I

WHITE Chocolate Macadamia Brittle Cheesecake by Kitchen's Best

discovered more than 10 years ago. It started when I asked my kids what cookies to teach me a few family recipes like those in our cookies, we're delicious and semi-cut. Since she was in fact who then and stopping with us, I thought it would be good to learn these recipes the way his taught her because she would probably be getting to a few years," recalls doctor sister Grace Gonzalez (mobile number: 09209439705).

Gonzalez admits she has to bound learning to baking or cooking. Or that hasn't stopped her from whipping out baked goodies more advanced than sponge cakes and cookies.

"Most of our desserts are chilled or frozen. I started cooking ice cream four years ago because I wanted to try something different. So I experimented and came up with a few that flavors, then I decided to incorporate some of my old recipes into the ice cream. And it just took off from there," she reveals.

Gonzalez says has over 60 different flavors and would coming up with new ones "once in a while" because I enjoy it."

'Taipit'

Now, if you're driving north, chances are you may have taken those treats home with your hopes from Gonzalez's freezer.

Emma Sevilla Sicam-ora is now making sure the quality of her store's products stays the same as the time in the early '90s when her beloved guest-

The Maya Kitchen

Blockbuster Classes From The Maya Kitchen

Learning the many arts the Maya Kitchen way gives more value meaning with cooking. It is a fundamental, necessary ingredient to a healthy lifestyle. Learn the ins and outs of simple and classic cooking, get the proper tools and appropriate cooking and cooking techniques, and learn fundamentals and international culinary techniques.

Join a session from an a Japanese Korean inspires the secrets of preparing beautiful sushi art. The Maya Kitchen Cooking Classes are fun. How to bake, learn cooking & both for ages and the palate, and more. Maya Kitchen facilitators are kept in your business, it is never too late to learn how to prepare traditional cuisines, cured take and baked sugar free cakes and pastries to enjoy ethnically and hence.

ONE DAY SKILLS DEMO & WORKSHOP COURSES

7 Days Cooking Idea Plans: Nov. 09-Dec.19 9 a.m. 2 p.m. Pinto Art's, Chinese Pinto Nuts, Chinese Nuts, Chinese Pinto Nuts, Chinese Nuts, Chinese Pinto Nuts, Chinese Nuts

Champagne enhances flavor of food

FOR SOMEONE QUITE BIT ABOUT appearing in the company's brochure, Pierre Emmanuel Taittinger, when asked to pose, proved his humor line to call his product. He said that it should be better if he had a champagne glass in his hand. But he also liked that he was asked to pose beside the patriot that becomes his daughter. Hodie, the commercialization head of the family company. It just so happened that a run of Taittinger champagne bottles were near the project, which made the photo opportunity even better.

Taittinger Champagne could have been a company without anyone in the family as part of it. In 2005, all the family businesses that included Seiko, Seiok and Co champagne house were sold to an American investment company. When the businesses were all organized by the new owners, Pierre Emmanuel Taittinger, with the backing of a bank, bought back Taittinger champagne. There were several offers from different groups from many countries, but he said the bank knew that the Taittinger brand had to have a part of the family. And you could see on his face the pride at having won back what is said to be the third oldest champagne house.

After lunch, the head of Taittinger was back for a visit. There was a party the night before when Taittinger Champagne must have flowed, but Pierre Emmanuel said that he had a long one and he thought the guests were okay also. With that, he toasted his guest and drank.

Celebrations and champagne go together. Championships have to be poured to signify an winning team, certainly a waste—but it probably isn't great champagne but dropper sparkling wine. New heads are launched with a by breaking a bottle on its bow. Teaming partnerships, weddings and other milestones of one's life all need a flood glass with tiny bubbles rising to the top.

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COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

Food partner

But when Taittinger wanted to savor another day was that champagne "doesn't hide the flavors of food." With that, he asked that lunch be served by the staff of Pan Pacific Manila. He said that it was in Makati. It belongs to the slew of restaurants of Wynner Bridges, whose Asian's Ambassador distributes Taittinger champagnes.

A Brut Reserve nonvintage was served with the appetizers. Duck liver terrine selection, mushroom duxelle and duck scallop. The soup of asparagus of Jolaire bisque was accompanied by the Prestige Rose nonvintage, which Taittinger said is made from still red wine blended with Chardonnay which gives the champagne "a beautiful persistent color." When the perfectly grilled Australian beef tenderloin was served, it came with the Comtes de Champagne '99, the exceptional vintage wine made from 100 percent Chardonnay in a differently shaped bottle with the Comtes name more prominent than Taittinger. Our connoisseur with us declared that the Comtes we were having was still "young" because it was still under the wine months. We had the Comtes until the time of French.

Throughout lunch, historical footnotes were made. Taittinger stated how French king Louis XV liked to have his mistresses drink the bubbly champagne with him—never mind that it was born in monasteries.

He also declared that he drinks champagne daily, but added that he also requires pasta (pasta flavored liquor) either with almond syrup or tomato juice.

Information flowed like he was that day about the state of the Champagne region, and my pad couldn't keep up. I had to consult the "Oxford Companion to Wine" edited by Jancis Robinson (Oxford Press, 1999) to make sense of my notes.

Taittinger mentioned how the Champagne region can't increase the number of hectares (10,000 is a prime) more wine. The wine encyclopedia says that as a result, the region produces only one bottle in 12 of the total sparkling wines produced in the world. It is, therefore, and the western United States that have taken to producing sparkling wines. That's probably why Taittinger went into partnership in California with Le Domaine Carneros, a vineyard between Sonoma and the Napa Valley.

While champagne is a wholesome treat, it is more expensive than most of the non-sparkling concoctions. It is also Jancis Robinson who explains why beautifully in her book "Taking Pleasure: Confessions of a Wine Lover" (Penguin Group, 1997): "You pay more because of "the sheer depth of flavor that takes years to develop, the way such beautiful liquor in your throat like a comforting, slow release capsule of explosive warmth, and the fact that it melts rather than gets up your nose."

E-mail: pinoyfood2U@yahoo.com

STRAWBERRY of course with a glass of CHAMPAGNE

LIFESTYLE Food

Flavor of holiday memories

Childhood rites and kitchen rituals stirred into the recipe for unforgettable fare

By Anna C. Sebropoulo
Contributor

THERE ARE SOME FOODS THAT enhance the holiday feeling. Flavored with the memory of happy times and cushioned company, these add to the festive spirit around the table.

Happiness in bag of nuts

As a child, a brown bag full of chestnuts marked the beginning of the holiday season. It was one of those rituals my grandmother unknowingly imbued when she started with the input of variation, freshly purchased from a vendor in Quiapo. We would sit on the steps outside the front door, cracking open the shells and rolling our fingers with the coal-stained nut. Each hot little nugget was tossed around in our hands till it was cool enough to handle. These were shifty screwings and it was comforting to cup the warmth between our palms.

The test a shared bivouac food, with the eating process heightened when it came edible instead of bits and pieces. The interval between shelling and popping the sweet nut into the mouth only increased the longing and anticipation of the next bite. For a child, it was a curious thing that such joy could only be had when the vessel was up and cavity could be heard all around.

Traditions with labels

Adults evade a fuss over silly things like the leg of ham, glistening with glaze in a puddle of sweet sauce. Caramelized sugar formed a thin crust on the surface of the hapless swine, now baked and golden outside. The carving knife cut through to expose pinkish red meat, sliced in wafer-thin portions and sandwiched between hot cornbread. While ham was available all year round, it was the Holiday Ham that distinguished the Yuletide season from the rest of the months. Cured in oak barrels for half a year, the smoked flavor seeped into the fleshy, combined with an exotic spices.

The other filling option for the Filipino bread was queso de bola. The ball of cheese wrapped in red wax was only acceptable melts the Edam Filia label or Pete. One uncle took the pains to instruct on the rudiments of slicing the hard edam, cutting it in half and keeping straight lines to maximize an even ratio. The moon came on the heels of a misshapen cone that produced cracked bits instead of neat slivers. Besides maximizing a palatable appearance, the instruction allowed a less strenuous way to get cheese tucked into sandwiches.

Cup of comfort

The little bread was versatile, slathered with a spread of butter and dunked into a hot cup of iced chocolate drink, it was the poor but happy alternative to the continental. The delicate pastry topped with cheese shavings was sweet bread with layers of dough and bubble spots for trapped air and batter. It was one

GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

A LIFTH — By JOS.ABRERA

PUGAD BABOY — By PH. JUNIOR

DICK TRACY

LOWHANOTS — By ELIZABETH CHONGCO

JAMES BOND

ERVINE COMEDY — By STEVEN PABALINAS

BABY BLUES — By JERRY SCOTT

TULOOK — By MARK COLL

BEH — By DANIEL SHELTON

ATOMIC AND WEEDY — By VINA GARCELLANO

KIBO MACHINE — By MANDI ABRERA

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

	9		2					
				7	5			
8				3			7	
	1	5	7		4			
4							6	
			8		5	1	9	
2			4				1	
		7	5					
				9		2		

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

6	9	7	8	4	2	5	1	3
1	4	2	5	3	6	8	7	9
5	8	3	1	7	9	2	6	4
2	5	9	4	1	8	7	3	6
8	3	1	2	6	7	9	4	5
7	4	6	9	5	3	1	2	8
9	7	4	6	8	1	3	5	2
3	2	8	7	9	5	4	8	1
1	6	5	3	2	4	6	8	7

THE MAIN entrance of Ruanda Café from the street and a partitioned the casual outside dining area in the background

ONE OF THREE stylishly decorated private function rooms on the second floor

THE SMALL dining area with its black and white tiled floor and padded fabric wall

History and Filipino cuisine are served in this restaurant

By Lenie Cruz
Correspondent

INDEFATIGABLE HOUSEWIFE Ruanda Gail pays homage to her grandfather, the Eminent Filipino diplomat, journalist and soldier Carlos P. Romulo, with the lovely new restaurant Ruanda Café. Growing up with a grandfather who was bigger than life left many impressions on her, and Ruanda says she has found a most delicious way to make a new generation learn about him while encouraging unbeatable pride.

Ruanda Café, which occupies a grassy corner lot, brings adventurous designer flavor and a Filipino-Spanish theme to the functional interior of an older residential area in Quezon City. Designed by Ed Alcantara, the café has Asian blinders from Angeles upstairs, glass walls and doors open to the world, with Beach Music and drum roll sound to it. Verdant, sunny colors with black and white checkered tiled floors, is come alive with printed throw covered walls in oscillating greens.

The viscous dining spaces on downstairs patio/dining area with photographic arranged soundstages highlights in his illustrious career from his years as a young soldier to his years as ambassador and eventually as President of the United Nations General Assembly.

There are three private rooms on the second floor named Kalinaw (after Carlos P. Romulo's home), Kalipayanan (after the Ifugao word that means) and Kapayapaan (highlighting his years as President of the University of the Philippines). All the rooms are decorated in different pastel colors and similar refinement and simplicity.

The glass-enclosed outdoor

ROMULO Café's wood-burning and hearty Lola Virginia's Chicken Relleno, top left recipe, is available in serving daily by the family cook.

HIS BONES ABOUT IT Ruanda Café's Boneless Crispy Pata, Binagoongan

THE BRIGHT and airy main dining area of Ruanda Café sits 30 to 35 persons and features photographs of Carlos P. Romulo with the different presidents under whom he served.

courtyard is decorated with photographs of Carlos P. Romulo with the different Philippine presidents under whom he served as cabinet member.

Perfect porch

The area fronting the street creates a perfect perch for those who like to stay outdoors and observe the life.

On the walls of the restaurant are cabinets with the signature Filipino items in Romulo's customized piece, "I am a Filipino."

It's a new and unusual way of encapsulating history into a modern setting while giving the diners (who are) and outside.

Ornate to casual eating, relaxed socializing and comfort food dining, Ruanda's casual has a certain familiarity that appeals to all age groups. The menu includes a lot of family recipes like my Lola Virginia's Chicken Relleno, still made the old-fashioned way by the family cook. The Boneless Crispy Pata Binagoongan is already a bestseller, as well as the Sinigang Rice and our Pinoy Tilapia. We get families especially on Sundays who come for a big family lunch. The place is friendly for a diverse mix of people who like to have their Filipino cuisine served in a tight, airy and chic setting," says Ruanda.

Ruanda Café, with its laid-back, ochre flair is a breath of fresh air in a part of town that's constantly encumbered with chain restaurants, fast-food outlets, boss joints, pubs and institutions of mock houses. The owner has onto a point. Find in an area owned after the New Society of the Philippines, an opposition restaurant by Carlos P. Romulo.

Closely pride of place and ownership is apparent in Ruanda Café's surroundings. While it courts families, TV and show (in proximity to two giant television network stations), among its regulars, it should draw over the most dedicated Makati urbanite worth part of Quezon City.

The General must be very pleased.

Ruanda Café (332-7272), is located on 32 Scout Rallos corner Sto. Tomas Street, Project Mission, Quezon City. *Open for lunch, 11 a.m.-3p.m., and dinner to 11 p.m.*

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Flavor of holiday memories

From page E1

ably paired with a hot beverage, a brew of cocoa balls or nibbles, dissolved in a saucepan with water and milk. The difference between a good coffeehouse and an ordinary one, according to the cook, was the bolder, the wooden bunny, manufactured between the palms to stir the mixture in a vigorous rotating motion. It does mean the consistency and smoothness of the drink, which might have had hints of peanuts, added by the chocolate makers.

Love's labor

A coveted anniversary time-gather the holidays was the fruit cake. The dark brick of glazed fruits and nuts was a dessert loaf

loaded with nuts probably over a period of six months. The year my mother decided to begin making several cakes as early as June built up great expectations. She soaked the dried fruits in rum overnight with strict instructions not to touch the red fruits as the tightly covered containers stored at room temperature. The following day she creamed the butter and brown sugar, and we were beside ourselves trying not to get our fingers into the tempting bowl. Flour, cinnamon, molasses, milk with candied fruits and chopped nuts were mixed and poured in pans lined with parchment paper. After it was baked, we could smell the rum which she up-basted generously on the cake as it cooled. There was a whole ceremony of wrapping the loaves in a succession of cloth and paper before storing in airtight containers. Over the succeeding months she would periodically unwind the wrappings to wet a fresh dipped in rum over the fresh aromatic blends. What was launched to Christmas presents ended up being kept and shared with special relatives. It was the best fruit cake ever tasted to date.

New tastes

There were the staples of our Yuletide festivities, which I imagined all families spread until I got married. Food was a large part of my husband's family together. Hence, it was a puzzlement I did have little, normally taken with a variety of specialties

for three meals and two snacks during the day, set down seven table to the main course on the night when the grandest fare is normally served. They gathered around a huge steaming pot of chicken tinola, scooped generous portions into bowls and garnished with green onions and toasted garlic. Lots of calamansi and a

tinola in the interest of juice is employed for cooked rice dish as other than remembering food, but it changed as I watched them cut with relish, consuming enjoined servings with gusto. They had effectively passed on the happiness of a bowl of rare porridge, which is supposedly had the same flavor of a afternoon, a slice of dinner or a hot cup of thick dark chocolate.

Now tastes

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5:30 P.M Warmed Choco Caramel Cake — Chef Jonathan Bautista of Gastrogo
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Lyndon Pacheco of Vittoria Coffee
4:30 P.M Bibingka Souffle — Chef Christine Bacani of CCA Classic Cuisine
5:00 P.M — 30-inch single-layer cake or 50 tartlets — Chef Pearly Ajoon of Sherkhan
5:30 P.M — Banana Nut Bread — Chef Caroline Laviz of CCA Manila
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Yuletide chicken treats

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, have special bonding moments with family and friends with the Jollibee Chickenjoy Bucket Treats.

Available until Dec. 31, the Jollibee Chickenjoy Bucket Treats come in either solo six-piece bucket or with upgrades offering other equally delicious treats as add-ons. This bonus the six-piece Chickenjoy solo bucket for only P350. Upgrade Chickenjoy bucket with three rice and three regular soft drinks for adding P60. Or upgrade solo Chickenjoy bucket with three rice, three regular soft drinks and three chocolate sundaes for denied by adding P130.

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From classy Spanish cuisine to hawker food

TWO FOOD OUTLETS OFFER different dishes but the same satisfying dining experience. No diner will ever regret having a meal in either restaurant for he or she will get value for money.

Terry's—Unit 2, Building 8, Eastwin Plaza, 2316 Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati City (call 8441806). This is the first of the chain which now has outlets in Ortigas and Salcedo Village.

This was originally a store with the best food staff from Europe, then owner Terry offered small, wishes using premium buns and sausages. Soon enough, the dining area became a full-service restaurant.

Dining area—On the second floor, accessible through stairs with a unique futuristic mode of ingress. The area is spacious and is bordered on its sides by the store's wine cellar. Lighting is subdued. This could be improved.

Staff—Knowledgeable but not very attentive.

Service—A bit slow, but considering each order is freshly cooked, this is acceptable.

Suggested entrees—Our resident food critic Ricky Lo ordered the wide array of choices. Go over each item (done in Spanish with English translations) and find your fancy. Inside for Crema de Calabasa al Azafrat, a beautiful golden yellow blend of flavors and texture of pumpkin and saffron; the tapas Hamaquin Ancheles, three-layer roll of breaded sardine, tomato bruschetta and melted Swiss raclette; and Foie Pepite Sandwich, grilled. Angus beef (generously provided) on a layer of piquillo (small) peppers, extra virgin olive oil, Dijon mustard, tomato and lettuce. Wash this down with a glass or two of Merlot. Everything happily satisfying. Those with big appetites can try Costilla, Pulmolo and Paella. Wine tab will be reasonable.

Grand service, too charges. Senior citizens are honored.

Rating—3 Spoons

THE QUIET DINER
RESTOS AT A GLANCE

Makamaura—Upper Level of the Manila Ocean Park. This is reminiscent of the familiar owners to many years of Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Its interior some tasty, go around and choose what type of food you and your group would like to have.

Dining area—Wrapped around the circle of eateries. Chairs and tables are typical of Chinese restaurants, or Ribs. Noisy, crowded. People line up, pay and claim the food later.

Staff—Make sure orders clear or you'll get Hainanese chicken without the soup.

Service—As expected, fast. But there's really no real service to speak of because the diner makes the orders picks them up and gets the utensils.

Suggested menu—The plus is the cost of dining. Dishes cost from P88 to P130 per serving. The soups for Hainanese style fish and noodles; the Mee a bit too starchy, sticky in fact. Phad Thai was just okay. Crispy fries is "pwede na," said so is the Oyster Omelet. Peruvian, Indian and Malaysian cuisines are also offered. A sad-looking bunch was that of the Philippines, necked to a woman, allowed hidden (we had to look for it), selling only adobo and stringing.

No service charges, tissues are directed to a flat fare for payments.

Rating—1 Spoon

RATING INDEX — Poor — Good — Excellent

Pinoy-bot 'pandesal' Christmas

"MAYONG BAKO! ALAY MAKI!" loving sentiments or deed of warmth on Pandesal." These words are printed on Pan de Manila's special edition paper bag as it serves the season of giving. Pan de Manila has also prepared special Christmas gift packs designed with that quaint Pinoy touch. Following tradition that is fabulous as the Pan de Manila vision, the gift packs are bundled in wooden crates stuffed with hay to simulate the look and feel of the Nativity scene.

Two Christmas gift packs are available at Pan de Manila branches located in malls and in neighborhoods. It is priced affordably from P160 to P340, ideal for giveaways in this joyful time of the year. First is the three variants of Spanish-style sardines, which is a perfect "pulutan" to enjoy with

Pan de Manila breads.

Second is a special pack containing six sachets of assorted drinks such as Café con Leche, Chocolate con Leche and Chocolate Blanco, plus one Pan de Manila stoneware mug which can be used to enjoy these drinks—whether hot or cold. The third Christmas pack contains an assortment of three medium-bottle bread "pulutan," to be enjoyed everyday: Classic Cocojam, yummy Peanut Butter and scrumptious Triple Berry Jam.

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4:00 - 4:30 p.m. : Hello Kitty Dance Show
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BOATLOAD of sushi served at Umu

Night of food, fun and wellness

By Norma Chikiamco
Contributor

I ALMOST PUT QUIETLY FOR THE LUXURY of it all, but maybe once in a while hard-working writers for whom deadlines are a daily grind deserve the indulgence of a gourmet tour in a five-star hotel. And so we met, eight writers and myself, at the Lobby Lounge of Dusit Thani Hotel to begin an extraordinary evening of food and fun planned for us by hotel GM Pranab Banerjee and PR manager Issielle Delmo. This getting-acquainted portion was made more congenial with bowls of mixed nuts and tall glasses of iced tea, which the staff served almost as soon as we were seated. Beside our table, a number of hotel guests were enjoying the scintillating music and partaking of the scrumptious cheese buffet served from 7-11 p.m. daily at only P750 per person; high tea is also served from 3-5 p.m.).

Our next stop came as a pleasant surprise. Umu, Dusit's new Japanese restaurant, seemed to be in a different cosmos altogether. At the entrance, long tables of hand-wood were planked by chairs upholstered in silk fabrics, while at the bar Japanese chefs majestically prepared sushi and sashimi. Behind the bar, a soft translucent glow lit up a dining room where smaller tables were set with copper-colored napkins on black plates. A gossip steamer displayed mounds of salmon, chicken and vegetables for those partaking of the hotel's "Happiest Hour" deal, a selection of appetizers, grilled food and unlimited servings of local beer and sake (served weekdays, 5:30-7 p.m. at P800 per person; call 8073333 for reservations).

With these cozier rooms and three private rooms for private parties, Umu looked like an ideal place for family celebrations and business gatherings. My own favorite spot was the terrace overlooking the garden, where the waterfalls cascade into a pond of happily swimming koi.

Such a serene atmosphere made our appetizers taste even more delectable: flaked oysters with spicy mayo, lightly broiled fillet of salmon, Japanese potato salad, cuts of beef encasing barbecued eel and seaweed sushi rolls served on a wooden boat platter.

More delicious dining was in store for us at Bonjarong, Dusit's signature Thai restaurant. Living up to its name (which means "five colors"), the restaurant displays at the entrance a wall of colorful porcelain pieces painted with exquisite patterns.

During the many times I've dined in Bonjarong, I've always been extremely pleased, and this evening was no exception. The newbyet Thai cuisine at Thai Thani Hotel is known for was exemplified in every dish we had—from the tom yum goog, a spicy-sour soup of shrimps, lime and citrus seasonings, to the Phad Thai noodles, salad of crispy shredded catfish and shrimp paste served with sweet chili dip. Every dish carried like a democracy of flavors, with the sour, spicy, sweet and salty each having equal say.

DINNER in Bonjarong was a perfect balance of flavors.

DESSERT This served as Tasse Chocolate mousse, panna cotta and cherries

APPETIZERS served at Umu: Baked oyster with spicy mayo, sushi roll and broiled fillet of salmon on potato salad

Sugary treats

We could have called it a night after that but Dusit's had other plans. Dessert still awaited us at Tosca, Dusit's Italian restaurant. Tosca is recipient of Wine Spectator Magazine's "Award of Excellence" for its outstanding wine list. Tosca serves a modern interpretation of Italian cuisine. Just how modern was evident in the dessert trio they served us. The chocolate mousse was draped like a roll, the panna cotta like a loaf, beside which were wedges of fresh fruits, and the tiramisu was served on a shot-glass, its rum doused with bits of chocolate. Possession aside, all three had made layered levels of creaminess and sweetness. And just to top it off with that sacrilicious, we had a shot of limoncello afterwards, the full-

Tosca got the Wine Spectator Magazine's Award of Excellence thrice for its outstanding wine list

ian dessert liqueur made with lemons and vodka.

It wasn't to our itinerary that evening but I understand that Dusit Gourmet, the hotel's delicatessen shop, also serves all kinds of organic treats, such as macadamia chip cookies and vanilla cheesecake. The hotel is especially proud of the Tropical Coconut Chocolate Cake, made with grated ex Madagascar chocolate, spiced pineapple puree, white rum and caramel glassage.

A stopover in the boardroom gave Gilbert Yu, Dusit's F&B director, a chance to explain the hotel's meeting facilities, which includes four boardrooms and a grand ballroom that can seat up to 600. Possibly between espresso coffee and Kon, (which we came with each booking of a boardroom).

After all that eating, it was time to get some workout in. Off Fitness Center, we raised to follow the dance steps of trainer Edan Cornet but without much success. Oh well, leave it to the Downtown Spa, where the heavenly touch of a masseuse can induce complete relaxation and hopefully, drive out some of the accumulated calories and guilt.

By this time, it was well into the evening and the sedative swimming pool had become a desolate spot, quiet save for the strains of Thai music played by a pretty lady all decked out in gold jewelry. After playing some games, during which some of us embraced ourselves to see what we hoped were encouraging poses, it was time to call it a day and head back to our luxurious suite with its comfortable bed, plump pillows and widescreen TV. For a change, morning will rain and there will be no drinking since breakfast tonight.

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Editor Brenda G. Valeriano

ENTERTAINMENT

JOHNNY'S eldest daughter Ana Feleo sang "Someone To Watch Over Me." "What my son-in-law said, her dad made her promise that, whenever she sang it, it would always be for him.

'Johnny's love was so overwhelming'

By Philostrate B. Cruz
Photos by Rony Mandilaje

"YOU TAUGHT ME HOW TO dream ... You were the courage I never had to stay calm," Alice said TV actress Ina Feleo said in an eulogy to her father, veteran actor Johnny Delgado, during a necrological Mass held at the Mt. Carmel Shrine in Quezon City on Monday night.

Johnny, 64, died Nov. 19 during a year of battling cancer of the lymph nodes. He was buried at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City, on Tuesday afternoon.

Johnny's eldest daughter and a singer and stage actress, admitted

"HE KNEW I was mourning over him," said Laurice Guillen of her husband.

(STORY CONTINUED)

Stop losing your hair. Regain your confidence!

For most women losing hair is like losing vibrancy, self-confidence and self-esteem. And this could lead to depression, anxiety and feelings of inferiority. Stop losing your hair. If there are women like Interior Designer Tessa Prieto-Valdes and Designer Eva Abesamis who fought and triumphed against hairloss – you can, too. Discover their secret.

Excessive stress, gone at too much extreme styling methods could cause women's clueless. To keep falling and thinning, one needs the right treatments. In the Philippines, there's only one hairloss centre where advanced treatments and highly trained technologists are found: Svenson.

Tessa fought thinning hair as soon as she experienced its early signs. "Thinning hair makes a woman look older. I didn't want that to happen to me. When I noticed lots of hair on my pillow and my hair started to thin out, I immediately bought 'thickening' shampoos like I was desperate. They didn't stop my problem. Until thing I discovered Svenson. After a course of treatments, my hair regained its original volume. It's even softer, more lustrous. I could style it any way I want it!"

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

Eva Abesamis

Eva, on the other hand, wanted her results for her hair. "I didn't want to use other products. I just wanted the best. When a friend recommended Svenson, I decided to give it a try. I had no more falling hair. It's back to its lush, shiny, stunning look. I knew I made the right decision. Thanks to Svenson!"

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OPENS TODAY

Signs and symptoms of bad TV hosting

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torres

OUR RECENT NOTES ON THE lamentably low quality of hosts on local TV has prompted some people to ask us to provide a "guide" to determining who are the hosts to steer clear of so the very appropriately named "boob tube." Always happy to oblige, we've come up with these tell-tale and gruesome "signs and symptoms" of lousy, lazy or downright bad hosting on the small screen.

Hint off, when a host says, "I have a question to ask you" as he starts to interview a guest, that's a big sign of trouble. Of course he has a question to ask, that's his job—so,he doesn't have to say so!

So, why does he? Because he doesn't have a good question to ask...he's dressing down the Qdol. resigns to buy him more time to think up a good question.

Who can't be think up one good question after another? because he isn't intelligent enough, doesn't care about his job and the interview subject, hasn't bothered to do due diligence research on it, etc. Sorry to be even a host on TV!

Now that's a good question: you can ask about a number of the faces and voices on the tube. They don't own up to the responsibility of developing themselves as good interviewers, because the main responsibility they feel they have is to themselves, is them something wrong with the attention process be busy on local TV? Well, duh, yes. Hosts are often chosen because they look and sound good, not for what's between their ears and in their hearts...hea reach, awesome times get glib, shallow, self-serving "hosting."

Another "symptom" of bad hosting is when the host asks, "Tell us something about the event that [name of guest/artist] is holding." The question is too general and generic in that it betrays the fact that the [name/host hasn't done much to prepare for the interview.

He's supposed to have already gathered the basic facts on his own initiative, so that in-terview can begin at medias res (in the middle of things), and thus be briefer, more focused and thus more interesting and productive.

Once, you were interviewed by a well-known TV host, who focused on by asking us to write down the questions she would then proceed to ask us. She stared at her, dumbfounded. She bottom line is, it's the guest's job to answer questions, not the host's,unless think think up.

"Hey see, if you ask questions that the guest has thought up or approved, you're playing As game, and it has a something that self-respecting hosts shouldn't do. Because, the progenitor host's responsibility is not to make his guest look and sound good, but to come up with questions that are judicious and incisive enough for the show's viewers to get valuable information and insights from.

The good TV host must constantly remind himself of this responsibility in its interview. Frankly, a number of hosts take their viewers for granted, and instead focus on making themselves and their guests look good.

A third symptom of lousy hosting is when a host talks too much about himself, and consequently represents his opinion. Please, it's the guest's views that viewers are interested in. Just ask really good host and follow-up questions, listen well...and zip! down.

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THE KISS. Adam Lambert (left) said, was "in the moment," if people were upset, "that's their interpretation."

Idol's number draws outrage

NEW YORK—COMPLAINTS POURED IN Monday about Adam Lambert's sexually charged performance at the American Music Awards on Sunday, including criticism of his kiss with a male keyboardist/dancer.

One of Lambert's dancers stuck his face in the singer's crotch during the performance of "For Your Entertainment." The moment was cut out when the show was broadcast on a tape-delayed basis in the Mid-West.

"A lot of what I do is kind of theatrical," the singer said last week about the number's choreography. "That's how I perform."

Soon after the performance, comments were posted online. While crowding an elaborate set during the number, the "American Idol" alum rocker fondled another dancer and led run-ner on a leash.

Lambert, who's openly gay, later told CBS that the kiss was "in the moment" and that if people were upset about it, "that's a form of discrimination and it's not fair."

ABC said more than 1,500 people complained, and the Parents Television Council said it had heard from "outraged" mothers. The performance was a subject for the "late night" segment of ABC's daytime talk show "The View" on Monday, but Barbara Walters said it was too racy to be shown.

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Korean boy band at the CCP

SOUTH KOREAN BOY BAND SHINEE performs on Nov. 27 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, One of the groups that comprises the popular genre called K-pop (Korean pop), SHINee's music is described as mature-sounding. After releasing the EP "Replay," the five members hasn't come out with its debut album "The Shinee World" in August last year.

'Sweeney Todd' not family-friendly but sublime

IT WAS A RAINY SATURDAY NIGHT when I headed to Greenhills Cinema 6 to watch "Sweeney Todd," Repertory Philippines' newest musical offering—very appropriate weather for this macabre tale of revenge.

"Sweeney Todd" (the role played by Audie Gemora) is about a barber named Benjamin Barker, who was wrongfully sent to prison in Australia by the lecherous and corrupt Judge Turpin (Roger Teddy Quasi) who lusts after Benjamin's wife, Lucy. The Judge seduces and rapes Lucy, sending fears the chaste, Lucy poisons herself. Judge Turpin adopts the Barkers' daughter, Johanna (Lovely Abella). And as she blossoms into a woman, he decides to marry her.

Benjamin, renamed Sweeney Todd, comes back to England and plots his revenge against Turpin and his equally disturbed servant/pet, Beadle Bamford (Robbie Enriquez). Benjamin returns to his old barbershop, above Mrs. Nellie Lovett's (Mercha Luachongco-Yulo) meat pie shop. She helps him reestablish his trade and returns to him his beloved razors), and he helps her with her meat shop supplies.

This is certainly not family-friendly fare, but it is absolutely sublime material, one that inspires real actors would most certainly wish their teeth bite.

I was 16 when I was gifted with the "Highlights from Sweeney Todd" CD, and I immediately fell in love with the score, story and lyrics (but pitching adorable child vocals with top vocal chords is a no-no). Years later, I bought the entire cast recording and, around that same time, watched the movie starring Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter.

That rainy Saturday was the first time I saw this musical live on stage. The verdict: It was there hours well-spent.

As a whole, the cast gave a very good performance, but there were standouts—actors and singers whose brilliant chemistry elevated the production to a whole other level.

BACKSTORY

Lora Salonga

Mercha Luachongco-Yulo

I have worked with Mercha off and on for many years, and I enjoy watching her onstage (even when I happen to be doing a scene with her). I've always been a fan of her insightful interpretations, comic timing and emotional outpourings.

I knew that I would be in for something delicious with her portrayal of Mrs. Lovett. Mercha's portrayal of this practical and opportunistic woman was spot on. She turned what could have been a one-dimensional caricature into a flesh-and-blood human being with wit and humor who also truly understood the intricacies of Sondheim's seemingly chromatic score—every twist of her hand and bit of her rolling pin matched what's going on in the scene, and made perfect sense of it all.

I only wish her microphone could keep up with her (toward the end of the evening, it caused spikes of unbearable static).

Audie Gemora

If I had been a few years since I saw Audie as the leading man in a musical (he had unforgettable turns as Jesus in "Les Miserables" and Billy Bigelow in "Carousel"), but I have to say that this is the best (but for The role of Sweeney Todd right in his singing career ever. There wasn't one wrong note he sang, or one wrong move he made. Audie was mesmerizing and riveting, and if you haven't fallen in love with him yet in past productions, you will here.

AUDIE Gemora (L) with Roger Chan

PHOTOS

FNA Fekar: "I miss you already, Ophelia."

'Johnny's love' . . .

that she had trouble gathering her thoughts while making her own eulogy. "This was because I had such a big heart. His love was so overwhelming, till my life, for was Powerful and so full of energy. It was so painful to see the love of my life suffer," they explained.

Ann Wan, sing Gossip and Ice Geek: with "Someone to Watch Over Me." She recalled that when she was 18, he made her promise that, whenever she sang it, it would always be for him.

Johnny's wife, actress-director Louise Gubbins, thanked all the people that Johnny met in his work on films, TV and in the stage. "The arts gave meaning to his life," said Louise.

Johnny appeared in more than 30 films and TV shows, then went on a hiatus with his wife before coming back together in the award-winning movie, "Tanging Yaman."

Louise, a fitness director like Johnny was, thanked his many fans for their "warm hands and gentle voices," and his friends who gave the actor with "spiritual comfort, love and the strength to fight his illness."

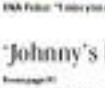
Johnny's brothers Bobby and Cito also delivered eulogies, as did TV director Edgar Mortiz, and actors Christopher de Leon and Ann Jacinto. Three Gen Z performers Erik Chipeco's "Tears in Heaven" and Nicky Rivera sang his version of "What a Wonderful World."

He told his doctors that his favorite song he played in the office with him, "It was a vacation song with very catchy. It's special to him, the crew included, even if," he told the reporter.

"Here or like," the theme of "Living Living," the short film that his wife and director, was played during the wake. Composed by Johnny Encano, Arthur reworked the song shortly before his death.

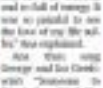
Seen at the wake were Sharon Cuneta, Iya Villaniy, Lorna Tolentino, family members, Pops Fernandez, Jaclyn Jose, Derek Ramsay, Lea Salonga, Isabel Rivas, Al Tantay, ABS-CBN executives Cory Vidanes, Malou Santos and Olivia Lamasan.

ERMILYN Cabrera



LORNA Tolentino

EDGAR Moritz



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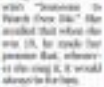

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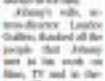

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'Sweeney Todd' not . . .

from page F1

HINCHE/Lumbingan and Marvin Ong

Marvin Ong

It's always a moment to remember when someone undertakes such an a performance so brave and daring that it makes you jump out of your seat. That's what I experienced watching Marvin. His Tobias was—awesome, and his vocal prowess stunning. This is a theatre act with a slow and simple mind, and Marvin transforms into one worth all the ears in the end.

I look forward to his future performances. From this very grateful member of the audience, bravo!

Group perfection

Two groups should be enumerated for their cohesive and precision that under-cadage an ensemble and PSI harmonies.

As Do As That ensemble goes, it was perfect—a group of strong actors and singers overpowing like "Greek chorus," our narrators and storytellers.

The orchestra, conducted by **Gerard Salvador** gave us nothing short of luscious and delicious! (despite there being only 13 of them in the pit at one time). Sondheim, last written a demanding score (brilliantly orchestrated by the masterful **Jonathan Tunick**), but these players were up to the challenge, and I must laud them.

Also worthy of mention are lead Bernicia, almost unrecognizable in her turn as the schizophrenic and demented Beggar Woman; and **Franco Laurel**, with his soaring vocals as the valet Anthony.

Congratulations to directors **Baby Barredo** and **Michael Williston** for their treatment of this now classic piece of musical theater history, set designer **Mio Infante** for keeping our eyes on the action, not the avenues; lighting designer **Jojo Bolaños** for creating an eerie atmosphere against which the actors could play; and costume designer **Gino Gonzales** for those wonderful depictions of modern aristocrats!

This is a theatrical event and be inform! I would like to see it once more, and be the first on my feet at the end.

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DID YOU KNOW...

ROBERT Barredo

ABC 5 will make films next year

ABS-CBN TV5 Chief Manny Pangilinan promises to produce more films than ABS-CBN and GMA Films combined—as announced 16 titles, and Bobby Ramirez, executive vice president and chief operating officer.

"With TV5's Wowowin, Cesar's Studios and Kuha Quest's Cignal, TV5 will play a vital role in providing content across all platforms," Pangilinan said. Beyond box

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ILOILO

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